

REMEMBERING THE BATTLE OF MILLIKEN'S BEND

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A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of History

Sam Houston State University

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

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by

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December, 2018

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## ABSTRACT

Tadlock, Isaiah J. *Remembering the Battle of Milliken's Bend*. Master of Arts (History), December, 2018, Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, Texas.

On June 7, 1863 Union and Confederate forces clashed at a Federal encampment on the Mississippi River near the town of Milliken's Bend. While this engagement was influential for the future of the United States Colored Troops, and thus the outcome of the Civil War, it has been largely overlooked by historians and the public at large. The accounts that do exist tend to be more of an overview of the battle rather than an in-depth look at its events and influence. This thesis will closely examine two regiments which faced each other that day in an attempt to provide a better look at the battle, and explain its loss of place in history. The subjects of these analyses will be the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Cavalry, Dismounted, and the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry, African Descent. The events of the battle itself will be covered, in addition to the lives of the men of each regiment before and after the battle. This will help to establish patterns of behavior and movement in each regiment that will help to explain the lack of memory in regard to the battle.

This research is conducted through an analysis of the service records of each regiment, Federal Census records, and County-level data, including death records. Also included are the records of national and State cemeteries where the veterans are buried, newspaper accounts of the battle and the soldiers involved, first-hand accounts from the veterans where available, and records of the Grand Army of the Republic. Repositories include the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History in Austin, Texas, the Indiana Historical Society Library, Indianapolis, Indiana, the National Archives and Records Administration, Washington D.C., and the Old Courthouse Museum in Vicksburg, Mississippi. Other histories concerning Milliken's Bend include Joseph Blessington's

*Campaign of Walker's Texas Division*, Benjamin Quarles' *The Negro in the Civil War*, John Winters' *The Civil War in Louisiana*, Richard Lowe's *Walker's Texas Division*, and Linda Barnickel's *Milliken's Bend*. All of these accounts consider the opposing sides as a whole, whereas the approach of this thesis is microhistorical, and will examine the battle from the viewpoint of two regiments.

KEY WORDS: Milliken's Bend, Louisiana, Texas, Civil War, United States Colored Troops, Collin County, Grayson County, Cooke County, Trans-Mississippi.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are many people to thank for the development of this thesis, but first and foremost I would like to thank my wife, Melissa. Her patience and feedback on ideas that developed from my work have been invaluable. Her understanding on the time that this work has taken from her is more deeply appreciated than I can adequately state. I would like to thank Dr. Brian Jordan, the head of my thesis committee, for his wonderful feedback and critiques of my work, which have made it that much stronger. I would like to thank the staff of the Dolph Briscoe Center in Austin for their patient assistance with my many inquiries, and to Sarah Traugott of that institution for her aid in obtaining copies of the papers and diaries of the men of the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Cavalry. I would also like to thank Linda Barnickel for her assistance with casualties of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana. My thanks also to my professors Carrie Allen of Blinn College and Beverly Tomek of the University of Houston-Victoria. Their class projects unwittingly laid the groundwork for this thesis.

Lastly, I owe many thanks to the descendants of the men of the 16<sup>th</sup>, and to others who have rendered their aid in finding information on many of the men of that regiment. Many thanks to Suzie Kelting Myers, John Aaron Wade, Henry Stobbs, Bennett Pearson, Ashley Davis Hamilton, Pat Rabb, to Malinda Allison of the Fannin County Historical Commission for the provision of the memoirs of John W. Connelly, and in particular to Messrs. John Scanlan and Terry Naylor, both now deceased. There are many others to whom I owe thanks, but the space of this volume is too limited to express it.

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## CHAPTER I: THE HISTORY OF A BATTLE

On the night of June 6, 1863, Lieutenant Benjamin Hampton of Company I, 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Dismounted Cavalry lay asleep under the stars. It was a brief, four-hour rest after a hard day's march, but Hampton did enjoy the respite. The anxious young officer began to talk in his sleep, waking the friend at his side, Private John Scott of Company C. With that foresight peculiar to soldiers, Hampton was dreaming of his death in battle the next day. Thirty-seven years later, though much embellished, Scott would vividly recall the incident in a speech given at an Old Settlers' Reunion in Sherman, Texas. Lieutenant Benjamin Hampton was indeed killed at the battle of Milliken's Bend on June 7, 1863, as he had foreseen. John Scott, sleeping at his side, would never forget the incident, nor the battle that took his friend's life.<sup>1</sup> More notable figures of the period would recall Milliken's Bend, too, including Abraham Lincoln. In a conversation in the White House with Frederick Douglass on the treatment and condition of blacks in the military, Lincoln found himself on the defensive. "Remember," Lincoln admonished, "that Milliken's Bend, Port Hudson, and Fort Wagner are recent events; and that these were necessary to prepare the way for this very proclamation of mine." The Battle of Milliken's Bend was only the second time in the course of the Civil War that former slaves, now in Federal uniforms, had clashed with Confederates. This is the battle's primary claim for a place of note in history, since little of military or strategic value was accomplished by either side.

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<sup>1</sup> *Sherman Daily Register*, October 13, 1900; Joseph Blessington, *The Campaigns of Walker's Texas Division: Containing a Complete Record of the Campaigns in Texas, Louisiana, and Arkansas*. Reprint. (New York: Lange, Little & Co., 1875) 94; Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers Who Served in Organizations from the State of Texas, War Department Collection of Confederate Records, Record Group 109, National Archives, Washington D.C. (Microfilm M323) – hereafter cited as Compiled Service Records of the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Cavalry, unless otherwise noted [Fold3.com]. Historian John White details many occurrences of death dreams in the Civil War – with a note on some fabrications – in his work *Midnight in America*.



The battle took place on the western bank of the Mississippi River, several miles to the northwest of Vicksburg, Mississippi, and was a part of the Vicksburg Campaign. Situated on the eastern bank of the Mississippi, Vicksburg was an area of vital importance to both armies. For the Confederacy, maintaining control of the city meant that a vital waterway for commerce, trade, and much-needed military supplies remained open. Additionally, Vicksburg was a vital joint between the eastern and western halves of the Confederacy. Loss of the city meant a sundering of the Confederacy itself. This last point was also one of the reasons that the city was vital to the Union. By cutting their foe in two, they hoped to sever the lifeline of the rebellion. Initially, Milliken's Bend was a supply depot for the Union Army besieging Vicksburg. It was hoped that by attacking supply depots like Milliken's Bend, a lack of provisions would force a withdrawal of Federal forces and thereby lift the siege. Unknown to the Confederate authorities at the time of the battle, Milliken's Bend was no longer being used to supply the Federal war machine at Vicksburg. Even the mighty Mississippi itself was no longer being used to bring in supplies. Instead, the Union Army had moved their supply lines to points on the nearby Yazoo River. In ignorance of these proceedings, the Confederates launched their attack on what they still believed to be Union outposts supplying siege troops.<sup>2</sup>

Only a week after the battle, reports appeared in such papers as the *New York Times* reporting the number of Federals engaged as "less than 1,000, over 600 of whom were negroes." In fact, the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry, African Descent fielded slightly more than seven hundred men that day. Another newspaper from Washington, D.C., claimed that the Union troops had no artillery, but that McCulloch's Brigade did, and that the

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<sup>2</sup> Winston Groom, *Vicksburg 1863* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009), 125, 131, 387.

Federals had engaged McCulloch with cavalry at first. Yet another from Wisconsin appeared to believe only a single black regiment had been present, when in fact there had been four. All of these accounts put the total number of Federal casualties at just over 200. Historian Richard Lowe numbers the wounded alone at nearly three hundred. Some three weeks after the battle the *Cleveland Daily Leader* claimed that General Richard Taylor, General Walker's superior, hanged all of the Union troops taken prisoner at Milliken's Bend (subsequent investigations have uncovered only two officers executed, neither of whom died on orders from Taylor). Most newspapers of the time also stated that the battle was a more serious affair than had initially been thought.<sup>3</sup> To the surprise of both their commanders and their enemies, the African Brigade had stood their ground and fought with savage ferocity. It was a momentous event, and one that would have lasting effects on the war.<sup>4</sup>

Yet despite its impact, Milliken's Bend would be largely forgotten, and where it was not forgotten, it was badly remembered. Numerous questions arise from these circumstances, including why the battle was forgotten, why the remnant of its memory has been so skewed, and why those who fought it allowed it to pass from memory. Henry McCulloch estimated his numbers in the battle at 1,500, while the African Brigade believed their ranks to hold slightly more than 1,100. Yet few memories of the battle

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<sup>3</sup> *The Times*, June 13, 1863; *Evening Star*, June 15, 1863; *Daily Gazette* (Janesville), June 13, 1863; Compiled Military Service Records of Volunteer Union Soldiers Who Served with the United States Colored Troops: Infantry Organizations, 47<sup>th</sup>-55<sup>th</sup>, National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 94, Roll 0032, hereafter cited as Compiled Service Records of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry, African Descent, unless otherwise noted; Lowe, 97; Linda Barnickel, *Milliken's Bend: A Civil War Battle in History and Memory* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2013) 90; *Daily Leader*, June 30, 1863; Lowe, 98.

<sup>4</sup> David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 16-17; Richard Lowe, *Walker's Texas Division, C.S.A.: Greyhounds of the Trans-Mississippi* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003) 92-99.

have been passed down by those who fought it. In his book *Race and Reunion*, Historian David Blight asserts that “Deflections and evasions, careful remembering and necessary forgetting, and embittered and irreconcilable versions of experience are all the stuff of historical memory.” These elements of historical memory certainly hold true in the case of Milliken’s Bend. Though it took place more than a month after Milliken’s Bend, battles like Fort Wagner have captured the public imagination on the bravery of African-American troops in the Civil War. Historian Benjamin Quarles, in his work *The Negro in the Civil War*, for instance, devotes his entire opening chapter to Fort Wagner, and a mere five pages to Milliken’s Bend. In 1975, some twenty years after Quarles’ volume appeared, a 1975 North Texas newspaper featured an article on the life of Milliken’s Bend veteran John Gallagher, mis-identifying the battle as “Mulligan’s Bend.”<sup>5</sup>

Since the battle took place, only five major works have considered Milliken’s Bend. In chronological order, these are Joseph Blessington’s *The Campaigns of Walker’s Texas Division*, Benjamin Quarles’ *The Negro in the Civil War*, John Winters’ *The Civil War in Louisiana*, Richard Lowe’s *Walker’s Texas Division, C.S.A.*, and finally, Linda Barnickel’s *Milliken’s Bend*. The accounts of Blessington, Winters, and Lowe all take their perspective from the Confederates, whereas Quarles and Barnickel take theirs from the Union. Regardless of perspective, there is a consensus among all five as to the particulars of the engagement. On the night of June 6, 1863, Walker’s Texas Division, having briefly encamped at Richmond, Louisiana, marched out for what was intended to be a two-pronged assault on the Federal outposts at Young’s Point and Milliken’s Bend. After a five-mile march to a crossroads near Oak Grove Plantation, the Division’s three

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<sup>5</sup> Barnickel, 103-07; Benjamin Quarles, *The Negro in the Civil War* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1953), 3-21; Blight, 5.

Brigades parted ways. Hawes' Brigade went right to attack Young's Point, and Henry McCulloch's Brigade went left toward Milliken's Bend. Randall's Brigade remained behind at the crossroads, operating as a reserve force. Sometime between two and three o'clock in the morning, McCulloch's cavalry scouts encountered a Federal picket force approximately one mile out from Milliken's Bend and were driven back by a Federal volley. Rushing back to their own lines, the scouts were again fired on by their own forces, whose nerves were on edge in anticipation of the coming battle.<sup>6</sup>

McCulloch sent forward a skirmish line, and pushed Lieb's pickets back to the Bend. No further action took place until daylight, at which time McCulloch placed the four regiments of his Brigade in line of battle to commence the attack. The 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Infantry would remain behind in reserve, while the 19<sup>th</sup> Texas Infantry under Richard Waterhouse took position on the Confederate right across the Richmond Road. The 17<sup>th</sup> Texas Infantry under Colonel R.T.P. Allen took the center, and the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Cavalry, Dismounted, commanded by Colonel Edward Gregg, took position on the left. Ahead, the four regiments of the African Brigade had taken their positions behind a levee. The 9<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry, African Descent, had taken its position on the Federal left. Immediately to its right, the 1<sup>st</sup> Mississippi Infantry, African Descent waited in line, and to its right, the 13<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry, African Descent. At the far end of the Federal line, the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana, African Descent had fallen into line. A small gap stood in the line between the 11<sup>th</sup> and the 13<sup>th</sup> Louisiana regiments, in anticipation of the arrival of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Iowa Infantry, en-route via river transport. In the waiting Confederate lines, the order was

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<sup>6</sup> Barnickel, 85-100; Blessington, 94-103; Richard Lowe. 2004. *Walker's Texas Division, C.S.A.: Greyhounds of the Trans-Mississippi*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 86-101; Quarles, 220-225; John D. Winters, *The Civil War in Louisiana* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1963), 199-201.

given to advance. Marching at an oblique angle, with the 19<sup>th</sup> Infantry closing first, McCulloch's Brigade moved toward the enemy, making a collapsing V-shape as the two lines neared. Federal rifle pits and large hedges broke up the precision of McCulloch's advance. In order to approach the levee behind which their enemy waited, the men of McCulloch's regiments were forced to break ranks and file through gaps in the hedges. After reforming as best as they were able, they charged the Union lines. Federal fire inflicted heavy losses while the regiments formed for the charge.<sup>7</sup>

Exchange of fire was minimal past this point, and as the two sides came together, they began to fight with bayonets and clubbed muskets. What followed was a brief, yet vicious hand-to-hand fight, in which the newly-formed black regiments fought with a strength and determination that surprised both the Confederates and their own officers. However, the Federal line soon gave way under the assault, and was driven back to a second levee adjacent to the riverbank. While in pursuit of the fleeing Union soldiers, some Texans stopped to loot the Federal camp that lay in between the two levees. Others, continuing the pursuit, found their advance checked by the rallying Yankees. Two Federal gunboats had also been waiting for an opportunity to fire on the Confederates, and as they approached the second levee, the *Choctaw* and the *Lexington* opened fire. Faced with overwhelming firepower, the Texans withdrew to the first levee, and continued to fire at long range until noon, by which time it was evident that no further progress could be made. The order to withdraw was given, and McCulloch's Brigade pulled back to Oak Grove Plantation. From first contact, the entire engagement had lasted approximately nine hours.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

While some variations exist in the individual tellings, what all of these accounts have in common –whether Union or Confederate– is that they examine the battle from a distance. To be fair, it is all but impossible to accurately depict a battle without some degree of inclination to the Union or Confederate side, unless the clash involves a miniscule force. Nevertheless, by examining two regiments from an engagement, in this case Milliken’s Bend, patterns emerge that are lost when looking at the battle from an overall perspective. Historian Kenneth Noe is a proponent of the microhistorical approach. In his essay “Jigsaw Puzzles, Mosaics, and Civil War Battle Narratives,” Noe makes it clear that close examination of Civil War battles for lost details will rarely bring concrete results or finality. However, he also demonstrates that they can help bring to light information that time or contemporary sources have obscured. Among the items that Noe cites for this is the battle of Perryville, where archaeology revealed artillery locations, and the intense barrages faced by Tennessee regiments. Such examinations are not fully possible at Milliken’s Bend, as much of the battlefield has been claimed by the Mississippi River. Therefore the digging that takes place to uncover its secrets must come from exploring the men who fought it, and from the memories, both direct and indirect, that they left behind. Richard Brown is another historian in favor of the microhistorical approach. Of that method he wrote,

When we see the images of person, places, and events in newspaper photos, the images may be ‘truthful’ representations. But if we examine those images closely under a magnifying glass we will not see a person’s face, but a grid of dots of varying size and intensity.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Noe, Kenneth W. 2007. "Jigsaw Puzzles, Mosaics, and Civil War Battle Narratives." *Civil War History* 53, no. 3: 237-242. *Humanities Full Text (H.W. Wilson)*, EBSCOhost (accessed December 9, 2017); Barnickel, 173; Richard D. Brown, author. 2003. "Microhistory and the Post-Modern Challenge." *Journal Of The Early Republic* no. 1: 8-9. *JSTOR Journals*, EBSCOhost (accessed December 10, 2017).

In essence, while previous historians have drawn out a particular image of the battle of Milliken's Bend, taking a magnifying glass to it allows the viewer to see its composition more clearly. In a similar fashion to historian Lesley Gordon's recent book, *A Broken Regiment*, a microhistory of the 16<sup>th</sup> Connecticut Infantry, the methodology for this thesis follows a specific group of men. Gordon stated that she wished to follow the men "as far as the historical record leads," but also noted that she was using a representative sample.<sup>10</sup> The methodology used in this project attempts to locate as many of the combatants from the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Cavalry and the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry as historical records will allow. If successful, it will make a more finely-grained mosaic of the battle. More than this, following the post-war lives of these men should help to explain the loss of place and memory for the battle of Milliken's Bend. Among the innovations undertaken in this thesis is the use of wound analysis to determine training levels in the two regiments. Just as vital to this effort is the element of group perspective, and how men from both the Union and Confederate armies viewed not only the battle, but their own roles in it. Also mined are the five previous accounts of Milliken's Bend in print. Where this work differs from the previous accounts of Milliken's Bend is that most of those authors have relied on anecdotal evidence to examine the battle. While this account also makes use of such evidence, it also delves deeply into the service records of both regiments to draw out statistical data about the battle, and the men who fought it. In doing so it considers the backgrounds of the men, including origin, profession, migration patterns, and their fates in the years following the battle.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Lesley Gordon, *A Broken Regiment: The 16<sup>th</sup> Connecticut's Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2014), 16.

<sup>11</sup> The Microhistorical approach is one that allows for much finer detail, but can be done either well or badly. B.P. Gallaway's book *The Ragged Rebel* follows the military career of a single soldier in the 12<sup>th</sup>

Joseph Blessington, the first person to commit an account of the battle to paper, could be forgiven for examining the battle from the perspective of his own regiment, the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Infantry. His reason for not doing so is perhaps that the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Infantry played very little part in the battle, aside from driving back the Federal picket line before the main assault began.<sup>12</sup> This being the case, Blessington's account is both eyewitness, and second-hand, for his regiment never crossed bayonets with Federal troops during the main part of the battle. In speaking of the Confederates, though, Blessington's references are often to "McCulloch's Brigade," this being the whole Confederate force, rather than a singling out of his own regiment.<sup>13</sup> Though Blessington does single out certain individuals for their actions during and after the battle, it is clear that he has taken the larger approach. The next book, published some ninety years after the battle, and roughly eighty years after Blessington's account, is Benjamin Quarles' *The Negro in the Civil War*.

Quarles' volume not only considers both sides as a whole, but mistakenly asserts that there was a fort at Milliken's Bend, when in fact there was nothing more than a Federal camp. Quarles takes his point of view from the Federal troops, of whom he estimates there were some 1,410 present, with the inclusion of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Iowa Infantry,

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Texas Cavalry. While it is a fascinating insight into the life of a Confederate soldier, it provides little in the way of historical record. It completely glosses over the majority of the battle of Cotton Plant after the title character, David Nance, was wounded in the opening skirmish. By contrast, Trevor Wardlaw's recent work *Sires and Sons*, which follows the 22<sup>nd</sup> Texas Infantry, does an excellent job of both following the men of the regiment, and adding to the historical narrative. Traditional histories tend to focus on the larger picture, and the earthshaking moments, rather than attempting to explain why they happened. The works that chronicle Milliken's Bend are for the most part, no exception. Attempting to uncover finer details allows for a better explanation of why battles unfold in the ways that they do.

<sup>12</sup> Blessington, 19, 96-98; Lowe, 89; Mamie Yeary, *Reminiscences of the Boys in Gray, 1861-1865*. (Dallas: Smith & Lamar, 1912), 665-66 [Portal to Texas History].

<sup>13</sup> Blessington, 95-102.



which had been stationed mostly at Milliken's Bend, but also at nearby Young's Point since April 1, 1863. Quarles also holds that the Confederates had only made the decision to assault Milliken's Bend in the same month in which the battle took place. In reality, the order to attack had been given in April, while Walker's Texas Division was still camped at Pine Bluff, Arkansas. Like Blessington, Quarles mentions a line of skirmishers sent forward to deal with Federal pickets before the battle began in earnest, though neither author states which regiment comprised these men. Quarles also brings up for the first time the cries of "no quarter" which the Texans purportedly shouted as they rushed the levee.<sup>14</sup> Both of these items will be examined in greater detail later in this chapter.

Quarles mentions only three black regiments as having been present for the battle, where later authors, using official records, list four.<sup>15</sup> As can be seen from this brief overview, Quarles' account, though one of only two taken from the Union perspective, is full of misinformation. This is a real pity, given that the subject matter of his book is the experience of black troops in the Civil War. Such a work should have been given greater effort, especially in light of the fact that he goes on to cite General McCulloch's report of the battle, in which the Texas General related with an air of surprise that the troops of the African Brigade had fought hard against his men.<sup>16</sup> Quarles, too, has looked at the opposing sides as a whole, and not sought out which regiments faced each other, or delved more deeply into their experiences. However, for this lack of depth and misinformation, the argument could be made that his account was superior in many ways to that of his successor.

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<sup>14</sup> Quarles, 220-22; Harold D. Brinkman, Ed. 1995. *Dear Companion: The Civil War Letters of Silas I. Shearer*. Ames: Sigler Printing & Publishing, Inc.; Lowe, 71.

<sup>15</sup> Barnickel, 204.

<sup>16</sup> Quarles, 222.

John Winters' *The Civil War in Louisiana* was published a decade after Quarles' *The Negro in the Civil War*; the year of Milliken's Bend's centennial anniversary.

Winter's account of the battle is a mere three pages in a volume whose actual text runs to more than four hundred pages. Like the previous accounts, Winters does not break down the respective forces on each side further than their Brigades. Unlike Quarles, Winters is far from complimentary of the African Brigade's performance, accusing them of having "cowered below their cotton works."<sup>17</sup> Winters does not confine his criticism of the battle to the Union troops, but accuses General McCulloch, the Confederate commander, of inflating the enemy's performance to cover his own failure. Thus Winters, like Quarles before him, seems not to have properly analyzed the material available. A look at Winters' notes from the pages on Milliken's Bend also reveals a small number of primary sources, and an abundance of secondary material on black troops. In fairness to Winters, however, his book was intended to be an overview of Louisiana's involvement in the Civil War. Thus, he may be forgiven for not putting a great deal of effort into a single engagement of little strategic importance.

The book that followed Winters some forty-one years later was a marked improvement, both in terms of sources, and in giving credit where it was due on both sides. Richard Lowe's *Walker's Texas Division, C.S.A.* relates the battle of Milliken's Bend from the perspective of the Confederates. While Lowe does mention the individual regiments on both sides, he still looks at them as whole Brigades, instead of breaking them down fully for further analysis. The first writer to cover Milliken's Bend in detail in the new millennium, Lowe brings a humanity to the fight that is lacking in most previous

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<sup>17</sup> Winters, 199-201.

accounts. His is also the first since Blessington to go into graphic detail about the battle, and the injuries suffered during its course. More significantly, Lowe is the first historian to address the uncomfortable issue of Milliken's Bend as a massacre of black Union soldiers. While he does not entirely dismiss the possibility, he does present evidence which indicates that no massacre took place.<sup>18</sup> In contrast with Winters, Lowe's account is carefully researched, balanced, and does not attempt to portray the men of the African Brigade as cowardly, nor the battle as a total failure. Instead, Lowe wrote that the battle "earned new respect for the idea of using African American soldiers in the Union Army." Quarles, writing ten years before Winters, also recognized this factor.<sup>19</sup>

The last book written to-date on Milliken's Bend not only recognizes the contributions of Milliken's Bend to the Civil War, it is one of only two to be written from the perspective of the Federal troops, and features the most in-depth analysis of the battle in print. Linda Barnickel's *Milliken's Bend* examines the coming together of the African Brigade, the battle and its outcomes, and the reasons why it has seemingly lost its place in history. Barnickel writes with enormous sympathy for the men engaged. Her look at the casualties suffered on the Federal side is more thorough than Lowe's, and so makes for a clearer picture of the violence on the levee that day. She also makes corrections to Blessington, believing that his low rank at that time prevented him from knowing the plans and motives of his regiment's field officers and their superiors.<sup>20</sup> However, like all four authors before her, Barnickel takes on both Brigades as a whole. While her work is

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<sup>18</sup> Lowe, 91-98.

<sup>19</sup> Lowe, 99; Quarles, 223-24.

<sup>20</sup> Barnickel, 87-97.

far more detailed than any of her predecessors, it still does not reach ground level with individual units.

Going to ground with two regiments, one Union and one Confederate, which met in battle, can provide both a complementary view of the battle, and also reveal patterns otherwise obscured by research methods on the larger scale. For this purpose, an analysis has been conducted of the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Cavalry, Dismounted, and the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry, African Descent. These two regiments met in battle at Milliken's Bend, being stationed on the Confederate left, and the Union right.<sup>21</sup> The majority of the injuries inflicted on the men of these regiments are likely to have been caused by one another. In this way, a more vivid picture emerges of what transpired on the banks of the Mississippi River in 1863. Analysis of the service records of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry can also reveal patterns of behavior. This is true not only for the regiment's rank and file, but also for its all-white officers. Examining the lifespans of the veterans of the battle also gives an idea of how long the physical memory of the battle lasted. Research on the men themselves, and the memories they left of the battle can also help to determine what the attitudes toward it were in the camps of both combatants.

With this information, a richer detail of both the battle itself and its legacy emerges. It is possible to address, at least in part, the reasons for the loss of place in both history and in national consciousness. Instinct says that the men of the African Brigade who fought there and helped to prove the fighting worth of black soldiers must have been proud of what they accomplished there. Yet examination of the men of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana indicates that this may not have been the case. The instincts of some may also say that the

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<sup>21</sup> Barnickel, 88. See battlefield schematic.

Confederates looked wholly down upon their black opponents. While this may be true in some cases, including Joseph Blessington's, there are indications that a hard-earned respect was felt for the men of the African Brigade by a number of men who engaged them. Taking a microhistorical approach to these subjects allows these presumptions to be challenged by new data. In these ways, and in others, Milliken's Bend becomes a haven for the unexpected, and a breeding ground for odd, sometimes eerie coincidences. There are few tangible things left from Milliken's Bend to which one can look for traces of it. Therefore it is the job of the historian to tease out those things that remain, and to look for answers from the memories of those who were there. Such efforts are extensive, draining, and above all, time-consuming. Yet for those bits and pieces that one can strain from the mass of information, it is very rewarding. These small pieces, again, like a mosaic, provide more pieces to the puzzle of what happened at Milliken's Bend. The subsequent chapters will take each regiment in turn, and examine their experience leading up to Milliken's Bend, and their lives afterward. The final chapter will examine the battle itself, and the mythos that surrounds it. In doing so, the intention is to strip away some layers put down by time, and to take a look at the battle of Milliken's Bend as it really happened.

## CHAPTER II: THE 16<sup>TH</sup> TEXAS CAVALRY

On March 8, 1864, Lieutenants Ira Kilgore and James K. P. Russell of Company E of the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Cavalry filed a formal complaint with their Adjutant General. It seems that on June 10 of the previous year the two had been placed under arrest by their Brigade Commander, General Henry McCulloch. The two officers were charged with deserting their posts and company at the battle of Milliken's Bend three days earlier. Since that time, the two men had been in a state of arrest, even after McCulloch had been replaced as Brigade Commander by General William Scurry. Now, eight months later, the two requested "as a matter of right, that we be tried by a Court Martial upon the charges alleged against us; or...that we be released from arrest, and allowed to resign with the privilege of transfer." Kilgore and Russell would wait another month before receiving their answer. They would not appear before a court martial, but were permitted to resign on April 7, 1864. Their Company Captain, William T. G. Weaver, had forwarded their letter with a note that the two officers were "[sic] inefficient." The timing of the twin resignations is somewhat suspect, coming a day before the regiment would next engage the Federal Army. There is no indication that the two ever served in the Confederate Army again. They both returned to Texas, where James Russell lived out his life, dying in 1909. Ira Kilgore on the other hand, last appeared on the 1870 Census in Hunt County, Texas, after which his fate is a mystery.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Compiled Service Records of the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Cavalry, Lowe, 113-14, 133; National Cemetery Administration. U.S. Veterans Gravesites, ca.1775-2006. Online publication - Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc., 2006. Original data - National Cemetery Administration. Nationwide Gravesite Locator. Original data: National Cemetery Administration. Nationwide Gravesite Locator [Ancestry.com]; Ninth Census of the United States, 1870, Records of the Bureau of the Census, Record Group 29, National Archives, (Microfilm M593) [Ancestry.com].

In a number of ways, the lives of these two disgraced officers mirrored what has happened to Milliken's Bend. Like Russell, the major events of the battle are well-documented, and can be traced to a specific end. Conversely, like Ira Kilgore, the finer details of Milliken's Bend have been largely lost or forgotten. By examining the lives of the men who fought there, it is possible to brush away some of the cobwebs and dust that have obscured them. While two regiments will not allow for a comprehensive examination of the battle, it will shed light on its details. In order to do this with the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Cavalry, it is necessary to begin over a year before the battle, when the regiment first formed. The trials and transformations that the 16<sup>th</sup> underwent on the road to Milliken's Bend played no little part in the way the battle took shape, and why events happened the way that they did.

Beginning on February 17, 1862, a number of men in three North Texas counties began to recruit men for a regiment of cavalry to enter service in the Confederate Army. In Collin County, William Fitzhugh, John Kalfus, John R. Briscoe, and Hezekiah Warden recruited companies B, E, F, H, I, and K. Companies B and K were organized in McKinney, Company F near Millwood, and Company I near Blue Ridge. In Grayson County, James D. Woods and James H. Tuttle organized companies C and G respectively in Sherman, while James S. Pattie organized Company D in Mantua. Company A was raised in Cooke County – more specifically, Gainesville – by Frank M. Dougherty on February 21. The regiment formed and elected officers in McKinney on March 10. Without exception, the recruiters were elected officers. Most became Captains of the companies they had raised, whereas William Fitzhugh was elected Colonel Commanding. Edward P. Gregg was elected Lieutenant Colonel, and William Winfield Diamond,

Major. J.P. Barnett was elected Regimental Surgeon, and William Head Assistant Surgeon. Barnett resigned in 1862, and was replaced by Head on September 26 of that year. In all, 846 men mustered into the regiment that day, after which they rode out and made camp at nearby Sherley Springs.<sup>23</sup> The coming year would see their numbers seriously reduced. How long the 16<sup>th</sup> remained at Sherley Springs is unknown, but a letter from Dr. William Head indicates that they had moved to a camp near Clarksville, Texas by, April 20<sup>th</sup>.

It has been raining nearly all the time since we arrived at this place and for the last two days it has rained almost incessantly everything is very damp in our tents, and some of our clothing is wet. This is the condition that my patients are in. We have had considerable sickness in camp in the way of [sic] measles diarrhoea colds and some pneumonia. I have not lost any cases yet, but...I am fearful that it will not be long before I have to write the sad news of the death of some of the soldiers.<sup>24</sup>

Head's intuition was correct, as later records indicate that four men of the regiment died while at Clarksville. Fortunately, they would not tarry in Clarksville very long. Sergeant John Bryan of Company B wrote to his wife on May 14 from Hempstead County, Arkansas, stating that six companies, including his own, had crossed into Arkansas. The remainder stayed behind on account of sickness. The *Washington Telegraph* from Hempstead County, dated the same day as Sergeant Bryan's letter, supports the soldier's account. At least two soldiers were left at the camp near Washington when the regiment moved on. The *Telegraph* reported on June 1 that

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<sup>23</sup> Compiled Service Records of the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Cavalry; Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, Records of the Bureau of the Census, Record Group 29, National Archives, (Microfilm M653) [Ancestry.com], hereafter cited as 1860 Federal Census unless otherwise stated; D. M. Ray, *Roster of 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Cavalry, Dismounted, C.S.A.* (Whitewright: Self-publication, 1907), 3-23; *Galveston Daily News*, October 26, 1895; Collin County Genealogical Society. Collin Chronicles, Volume 9, Number 2, Winter 1988-1989, 32-34 [Portal to Texas History].

<sup>24</sup> William P. Head to Dear Wife, April 20, 1862.



Privates George McDonald and Hardy Carroll died on May 27, and were interred in the city's new cemetery with military honors. By mid-June, the regiment had moved to the vicinity of Little Rock, where Sergeant Bryan reported its first contact with the enemy: a brief encounter while the regiment was on picket.<sup>25</sup> The real trial would come less than a month later.

During the summer of 1862, Union General Samuel R. Curtis, stationed near the Pea Ridge battlefield, made a move toward Little Rock, Arkansas, intending to meet another Federal force near St. Charles. The departure of some twenty-thousand Confederate troops from Arkansas after the battle of Pea Ridge left the state with only a ragtag group of defenders. To remedy this, the Confederate government ordered General Thomas Hindman to Arkansas to mount a defense. Among the regiments defending the state at that time were William Parson's 12<sup>th</sup> Texas Cavalry, and the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Cavalry under William Fitzhugh. Curtis, in the meantime, avoided conflict with Confederate patrols, and took all the forage and sustenance from the surrounding area that he could carry. At the end of June, Hindman's tactics had convinced Curtis that he faced a much larger force than the Confederate general actually commanded. Hindman, believing that Curtis was pressing toward Little Rock, went to drastic lengths to delay his advance. On July 7, Curtis' forces would meet with two regiments under Hindman's command – Parsons' and Fitzhugh's – near the Cache River.<sup>26</sup> In the ensuing battle, Parsons engaged the enemy first, and was joined afterward by the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Cavalry. Sergeant John Wright of Company F in Fitzhugh's Regiment later wrote, "a man who claimed to be a

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<sup>25</sup> Ray. 12-15; *Washington Telegraph*, May 14, 1862; *Washington Telegraph*, June 1, 1862; J. S. Bryan to Dear Nan, June 16, 1862.

<sup>26</sup> B.P. Gallaway, *The Ragged Rebel: A Common Soldier in W.H. Parsons' Texas Cavalry, 1861-1865* (Abilene: Abilene Christian University Press, 2010), 35-45;

friend led us to where he said the Yankees were located and while going through a lane between two cornfields they fired on us from ambush, killing seven men.” The Confederates quickly rallied with a war cry from Fitzhugh, and charged in the direction from which the concealed Federals had opened fire. In this charge, a Yankee bullet struck Fitzhugh in the hand and arm, necessitating his removal from the field. Command then fell to Lieutenant Colonel Gregg, who commanded the regiment for the remainder of the engagement. The arrival of a Federal Howitzer and the belief that a Yankee force was flanking them, forced the Confederates to quit the field.<sup>27</sup>

The regiment had stood fire for the first time, and they had been bloodied. John Bryan estimated that twenty-five casualties had been taken. The loss of their Commanding Officer on the battlefield would also have implications for their performance at Milliken’s Bend eleven months later. On the day Bryan wrote his letter, another event had taken place that would place the regiment on the road to Milliken’s Bend. Bryan wrote, “[sic]Thair has been a good deal of excitement in camps for a few days our horses have been taken from us and we will have to foot it from this on....We gave up our horses this morning.” Lack of forage to feed the overworked animals had forced Hindman to dismount the regiment. Acting as infantry, the regiment was attached to a new Division under General Henry McCulloch in October, comprised entirely of units raised in Texas. The regiment was further reduced in size by a large number of men being discharged for being over age or under age. General Hindman had issued orders to

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 45-47; Yeary, 823; John W. Connelly, *Memoirs*, 166-67. Documents provided by Malinda Allison on behalf of the Fannin County Historical Commission, hereafter as Connelly *Memoirs* unless otherwise noted. Citation given as requested by Malinda Allison; *The San Antonio Light*, February 8, 1883; *The National Tribune* (Washington, D.C.), December 5 & 12, 1889. Connelly’s memoirs are actually part of a serial from the *Honey Grove Signal*, only two copies of which are still in existence. The writing preserved here is from a scrapbook of newspaper clippings discovered by the Fannin County Historical Commission in 2016.

that effect in June, but it was not until August that John Bryan reported the order taking effect.

[sic] Thair has been a good many discharged on account of too old or to young and some deserted or at least gone so that this redgment is nothing like as large as it was when we started from Texas.<sup>28</sup>

The shrinking of the ranks would not quickly cease. Disease spread through most regiments stationed at Camp Nelson, Arkansas, in the latter part of 1862. Joseph Blessington, a soldier in George Flournoy's 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Infantry, recorded 1,500 deaths from disease that winter. The 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Cavalry was no exception. Fourteen men succumbed to illness, including Captain John R. Briscoe of Company E. The subsequent vacancy was filled by the appointment of William T. G. Weaver. A total of twenty officers resigned in 1862 and early 1863, for various reasons. George McGlothlin of Company C resigned on account of chronic hepatitis. Captain Hezekiah Warden resigned because of an injury to his ankle joint, which rendered him incapable of marching. The regiment's Chaplain also resigned, though the reason is unclear. Perhaps the most colorful reason for resignation came from Captain M.W. King of Company G. King was the second Captain of Company G, as Captain James H. Tuttle had resigned sometime after July at Camp Crystal Hill, Arkansas. King and a small detachment of his Company had been sent by General McCulloch to destroy the stock of whiskey a local man had been selling to the troops. King and his men decided to partake before completely wiping

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<sup>28</sup> J. S. Bryan to Dear Nancy, July 13, 1862; J.S. Bryan to Dear Nancy, August 6, 1862; Thomas Hindman. Telegram to Albert Rust. 8 July 1862. Copybook of Telegraphic Dispatches from Thomas Hindman's command, 2 June - 9 Oct. 1862. Peter Wellington Alexander Papers, Box 9, Rare Book & Manuscript Library at Columbia University in the City of New York, hereafter cited as Copybook of Telegraphic Dispatches from Thomas Hindman's Command unless otherwise noted; Thomas Hindman, General Order Number 2, Copybook of General Orders from Thomas Hindman's Command, 31 May-30 Dec., 1862. Peter Wellington Alexander Papers, Box 9, Rare Book & Manuscript Library at Columbia University in the City of New York; Lowe, 41-42.

out the supply, but the good Captain drank more than he could handle. Not quite inebriated enough to have lost his reason, King decided not to return to camp and allow his drunkenness to be seen. Attempting to lodge elsewhere for the night and return to camp when sober, King, astride his horse, stumbled onto the headquarters of another Texas regiment. An unfortunate exchange with its Commanding Officer resulted in a violent altercation, and King's injury and arrest. Though King was able to explain the circumstances to General McCulloch, and was briefly reinstated as Captain, the shame of the incident forced him to resign. In his stead, Lieutenant John W. Connelly was made Captain, and would lead Company G at Milliken's Bend. In all, by the time the dead, age-restricted, and those otherwise unfit for service were removed, the regiment was able to field approximately 637 men.<sup>29</sup>

The largest change that would take place was the replacement of General McCulloch as the Division Commander. The day after Christmas, 1862, an announcement was made from General Theophilus Holmes, who had taken Command of the Trans-Mississippi in August. Major General John G. Walker, fresh from service as a division commander in Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia would be taking command of the Division on New Year's Day, 1863, and the men of his Division would love him. The specter of Milliken's Bend began to appear to the regiment early in December, 1862. On December 10, while stationed at Camp Bayou Metor, General McCulloch received orders to make ready to march the Division to Vicksburg. On

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<sup>29</sup> Blessington, 44; Compiled Service Records of the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Cavalry; Ray, 3-23; Connelly Memoirs, 170-72. Blessington also reveals, with particular relish, the use of alcohol among the men of his division while on a riverboat near Grand Ecore, Louisiana, several weeks after Milliken's Bend (see pages 128-29). Historian Bell Irvin Wiley also notes the various ways in which men of the Confederate army pursued and concealed spirits in his work *The Life of Johnny Reb*. Historian Steven Ramold covers the punishments for engaging in such illicit behavior in his book *Baring the Iron Hand*.

December 18, the Division began to march there, but a day later the order was countermanded, and the Division returned to Little Rock, Arkansas. John W. Connelly, now commanding Company G, recalled that “On the morning of Dec. 25, we were ordered to Pine Bluff, we marched and counter-marched until Jan. 8....It was said that Gen. Holmes was advised by the Medical Board to give Walker’s Division much exercise.”<sup>30</sup>

The reality is more eloquently state by Lowe, who wrote of this period that

The Texas Division occupied a quiet corner of the war, about midway between two Federal campaigns and not involved in either. Confederate commanders in the trans-Mississippi region fumbled and dithered with the Texas troops, sending them first toward Vicksburg, then reversing them toward northwest Arkansas – and then compounding their indecision by reversing the march three more times.<sup>31</sup>

Adding to the confusion, command of the Trans-Mississippi Department changed from General Theophilus Holmes to General Edmund Kirby Smith. Holmes and Smith were both veterans of the Mexican War, though Holmes was an older man whose former boldness had seemingly vanished. Unlike Holmes, referred to as an “old granny” by some of his men, the West Point-educated Smith seemed to have the experience and drive to effectively lead the Trans-Mississippi Department. Federal leadership seemed to have a clearer idea of what was needed. Control of the Mississippi River was of vital import to obtaining victory, and had been a focus of strategic plans back to the Anaconda Plan. Though their own efforts were also fraught with difficulty, the Federals would find

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<sup>30</sup> John G. Walker, *Greyhound Commander: Confederate General John G. Walker’s History of the Civil War West of the Mississippi*, Richard Lowe, Ed. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2013), 51; Lowe, 61-62; Connelly Memoirs, 173.

<sup>31</sup> Lowe, 59.

greater success with the appointment of Edwin Stanton to the position of Secretary of War.<sup>32</sup>

In pondering how to take control of the Mississippi, Union General John A. McClernand feared the potential threat from a Confederate stronghold upriver at Arkansas Post. Wishing to neutralize such a threat to operations at Vicksburg, McClernand launched a joint land and naval assault on Arkansas Post. In the summer of 1862, a number of men from the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Cavalry had been detached as sappers and miners at Arkansas Post by General Hindman. Privates James Kelly, Elijah Southward, Samuel J. Parker, and John H. Elliott were still there when the Federal assault was launched on January 9 near Milliken's Bend. The battle of Arkansas Post began in earnest on January 10, with heavy bombardment from the Union Navy. General Walker awakened his new command in response to urgent messages from the Confederate Commander at Arkansas Post, General Thomas Churchill, and began a rapid march to assist the garrison. The marching and counter-marching the Texans had been doing no doubt aided them in this endeavor, for they covered twenty-five miles on January 11<sup>th</sup> in attempting to reach their objective. Unknown to them until the following day, the post had surrendered on the afternoon of the 11<sup>th</sup>. Elliott, Kelly, and Southward had been captured, and would ultimately be sent to Chicago's Camp Douglass, where they would all perish within three months. Samuel Parker, though badly wounded, managed to escape.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid; Lowe, 71; Major John W. Tindall, *Joint Operations and the Vicksburg Campaign* (Ebook: Golden Springs Publishing, 2015), 9-10; Jeffery S. Prushankin, *A Crisis in Confederate Command: Edmund Kirby Smith, Richard Taylor, and the Army of the Trans-Mississippi* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005), 7-22.

<sup>33</sup> Tindall, 58, 62-63; Compiled Service Records of the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Cavalry; Texas State Library and Archives Commission; Austin, Texas; Confederate Pension Applications, 1899-1975; Collection #: CPA23901; Roll #: 454; Roll Description: Pension File Nos 23901 to 23920, Application Years 1905 to

For the next three months, the Division remained in Arkansas, near Pine Bluff. Then the new Trans-Mississippi Commander, E. Kirby Smith, learned that his territory had been penetrated not once, but twice by Federal armies under Generals U.S. Grant and Nathaniel Banks. Both Generals had been attempting operations in Louisiana. In response to this, and to calls for aid from other Confederate forces in the area, Smith ordered Walker's Division south to Monroe, Louisiana. The presence of Walker's Division in Monroe would make possible a strike on Grant at Vicksburg, Mississippi, or Banks at Alexandria, Louisiana. Theophilus Holmes, now commanding Confederate forces in Arkansas, did not send the Division out quickly. Walker's Texas Division finally set out for Louisiana on April 23. While en route to Monroe, word came that Banks had been repulsed, and so the threat at Alexandria was neutralized. This left only Grant to concern Walker. General E. Kirby Smith decided to attack Grant's supply lines at Vicksburg, in hopes of disrupting Federal operations at the siege. To this end, Smith charged General Richard Taylor with attacking Federal supply lines for Vicksburg between Milliken's Bend and New Carthage. What neither general knew was that Milliken's Bend was no longer being used as a supply point. The assault on Milliken's Bend thus proceeded, with the Third Brigade of Walker's Texas Division under Henry McCulloch chosen for the task.<sup>34</sup>

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1913; *McKinney Courier-Gazette*, January 1, 1941; Ancestry.com. *U.S., Civil War Prisoner of War Records, 1861-1865* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2007. National Archives, Washington, D.C. Register of Confederate Soldiers, Sailors, and Citizens who Died in Federal Prisons and Military Hospitals in the North, 1861-1865; (National Archives Microfilm Publication M918, 1 roll); Records of the Office of the Quartermaster General, Record Group 92; National Archives, Washington, D.C., 171, 196, & 234. Only Private Elliot's service record indicates such an order from Hindman, but the date of the order, July 28, 1862, appears for all three men. It is therefore reasonable to assume that all three were detached on Hindman's orders. Parker's service record does not indicate his presence, but his pension application does, as does his obituary in the *McKinney Courier-Gazette*.

<sup>34</sup> Lowe, 67-71; Prushankin, 33-35.

The regiment that marched from Milliken's Bend was a much different one than had marched to it. Most would remember having fought mounted at Cotton Plant eleven months before, but their casualties at Milliken's Bend were almost three times what they had taken in their first bloodletting. McCulloch's casualty report indicates that seventy-three casualties had been taken, with no prisoners of war. All were either killed or wounded. Seventeen were dead on the field, and a further three would die of their wounds. At least five men would require amputations. The report also recorded two abdominal wounds and two chest wounds. Nine wounds were to the arm, including Lieutenant George Dickerman, who was wounded in both arms, with the loss of his right. John J. Henry was wounded in the face, and James Caruth in the foot. Five wounds were received in the hand, and four to the head, including the mortally wounded Lieutenant Thomas Batsell of Company G. A total of seven wounds were to the leg, with three of them requiring amputation. John Hendrex of Company E was wounded in the neck, and Thomas Chaney in the side. The report also included four shoulder wounds, including Corporal Thomas Reagan of Company B, who would die of the wound soon after. The single largest concentration of wounds, however, were wounds to the thigh. Sergeant William Choice of Company G was shot through both thighs, and both Lieutenant Dudley Waddill and Private Enoch Elliot were shot in the thigh. This description of Waddill's wound is somewhat deceptive, as he was shot from above through the buttock, and the projectile passed through the back of his thigh. The nature of the remaining wounds taken are not listed, and so remain uncertain.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> United States. War Department. Confederate States Army Casualty Lists and Narrative Reports, 1874 – 1899, Record Group 109, National Archives, Washington D.C. (Microfilm M836) [Fold3.com]; J.S. Bryan to My Dear Wife, July 4, 1863; Ray, 3-23; Edward Dwight Dickerman and George Sherwood Dickerman,



The 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Cavalry had been in battle before. It was, in fact, the first regiment in Walker's Texas Division to have seen combat, and so was the only veteran unit in the whole Division. Something about its performance at Milliken's Bend, however, wrought a change in the way it was perceived. Neither the regiment, nor any of its ten companies had a nickname prior to the fight at Milliken's Bend. After that sanguine engagement, however, a name began to be used by both the men of the regiment, and those of the Brigade. Joseph Blessington, the first historian of Walker's Texas Division, as well as a veteran of it, referred to Fitzhugh's Regiment as "the bloody 16<sup>th</sup> Dismounted Cavalry" when writing about Milliken's Bend. In 1878, three years after Blessington's volume was published, an advertisement appeared in the Texas newspaper, the *Denison Daily News*. "All members of Fitzhugh's regiment, "the bloody 16<sup>th</sup>," who can do so conveniently, are requested to meet at the office of J. D. Wood, in Sherman, on Saturday, June 15, 1878, to make arrangements for a reunion."<sup>36</sup> This apparent nickname does not appear prior to Milliken's Bend. No diaries or letters of the men who served in the regiment use the name. However, the reunion advertisement seems to use it as a rallying cry. Its use by Blessington is exclusively concerned with Milliken's Bend. It was clearly a name with which he was familiar, but he does not use it in connection with any subsequent battles.

Nor was the 16<sup>th</sup> Cavalry the regiment which suffered the most casualties. R.T.P. Allen's Regiment, the 17<sup>th</sup> Texas Infantry, had suffered eighty-one casualties. The 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Cavalry, having lost both field officers to wounds, had continued to fight under the Senior Captain, James Woods. According to McCulloch's report, it had done so with an

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*Descendants of Thomas Dickerman an Early Settler of Dorchester, Massachusetts* (New Haven: The Tuttle, Morehouse & Taylor Press, 1897), 74-75.

<sup>36</sup> Blessington, 97; *Daily News*, May 31, 1878.

even fiercer spirit than before. One veteran of the regiment later recalled that its dead had fallen so many and so thick that he “could for some distance walk on dead men.” Andrew J. Lucas of Company H recalled that the enemy dead, “were strewn for half a mile.”<sup>37</sup> It is difficult to determine, then, whether the nickname arose from casualties taken or inflicted. What seems to be in little doubt, however, is that the genesis of the name lay in the bloody soil of Milliken’s Bend.

The Texans who survived that day on the western bank of the Mississippi would eventually fall to time and circumstance. Some, though, would fall much more quickly than others. Edward Parker of Company C, severely wounded, and sent home to recover, was killed in a massive Indian raid in Cooke County in December 1863. Nor can it be forgotten that the war would last almost two full years past Milliken’s Bend. In that span, the regiment would see action three more times. The Red River Campaign of 1864 would see Fitzhugh’s Regiment in action at the back-to-back battles of Mansfield and Pleasant Hill, Louisiana on April 8 and 9, as well as Jenkin’s Ferry, Arkansas, on April 30. While none of these battles would approach – at least for Fitzhugh’s Regiment – the carnage of June 7, 1863, they would still open gaps in the ranks of that day’s veterans.<sup>38</sup>

The regiment appears to have been peripherally involved in the engagement at Mansfield, though there were still casualties taken. Private William Simmons of Company G was killed when the gun of one of his fellow soldiers misfired while waiting on the order to charge. Sergeant John Bryan, who so lovingly narrated his experiences to

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<sup>37</sup> Collin Chronicles, 33; Yeary, 453; United States. War Department. Confederate States Army Casualty Lists and Narrative Reports, 1874 – 1899, Record Group 109, National Archives, Washington D.C. (Microfilm M836) [Fold3.com]; United States. War Department. The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union And Confederate Armies. Series 1, Volume 24, In Three Parts. Part 2, Reports., book, 1889; Washington D.C., 467, hereafter cited as Official Records [Portal to Texas History].

<sup>38</sup> *Snyder Signal*, December 7, 1913; Ray, 9; Stewart Sifakis, *Compendium of the Confederate Armies: Texas* (New York: Facts On File, 1995), 73-74;

his wife, was mortally wounded at Mansfield, and died several days later. The toll at Pleasant Hill was higher. In Company C, John H. Montgomery and Erastus Ross were killed, and Daniel Dickerman, Wharton English, and Alfred M. Douglass were wounded. In Company D, James A. Bailey and John Burke were killed, and Manson Judd was wounded, and Captain John H. Tolbert, previously wounded at Milliken's Bend, was shot in the hip. In Company E, John Cooke, Elisha Robinson, and W.H. Thorne were killed. In Company H, Corporal John Van Dyke was killed, and Samuel Whorton wounded. In Company I, Jasper Lancaster was fatally wounded, and would linger until July 4<sup>th</sup>. Company K took five casualties, though no fatalities. Captain Frederick Gates was wounded and left on the field, falling into enemy hands until the following day. Lieutenant Isaac Norrell received wounds that would require him to leave the service. The other three were Isaac and Joseph Smith, and Stuart Wood. Altogether, twenty-three veterans of Milliken's Bend were killed or wounded at Pleasant Hill.<sup>39</sup>

The third and final battle in which the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Cavalry would take part would be Jenkin's Ferry, Arkansas, on April 30, 1864. David Ray wrote his mother of the experience:

Our regt had 2 men killed and 10 or 12 more wounded. Jasper Scott had his leg broken and amputated above the knee. Jacob Caler is also severely wounded his leg was shot through below the knee the

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<sup>39</sup> Ray, 3-23; *The Daily Democrat* (Huntington, Indiana), April 20, 1886; H.D. Pearce Diary, April 8, 1864; Introduction to the John Samuel Bryan Papers; H.D. Pearce, *The Battel of Pleasant Hill*, April 22, 1900; Blessington, 191; Texas State Library and Archives Commission; Austin, Texas; *Confederate Pension Applications, 1899-1975*; Collection #: CPA16526; Roll #: 2716; Roll Description: *Pension File Nos. 05656 to 05705, Application Years 1896 to 1899* [Ancestry.com]; Collin Chronicles, 33; Yeary, 326. The account of Frederick Gates being wounded comes from both David Ray and Blessington. At the end of his book, Ray makes a roll of those who were captured at Pleasant Hill, and mentions that Gates was wounded and left on the field. Blessington speaks of having obtained information from an officer of the 16<sup>th</sup> Cavalry who was wounded at Mansfield and left on the field. Since the 16<sup>th</sup> did not engage the enemy until late in the day at Mansfield, and never came into close contact with them, according to H.D. Pearce, it is more likely that Gates was wounded at Pleasant Hill, where the Confederate lines were thrown into confusion, and a good many men captured. For the death of Elisha Robinson, see pension application #5667, Matilda Robinson.

large bone broken but was not amputated the Doctor thinking they might save his leg; another man by the name of Lee had his thigh amputated and since died and 2 others dangerously wounded I think all those mentioned will die except Caler and Scott who stand a pretty good chance to get well.<sup>40</sup>

Ray's prediction was good in part, for Jacob Caylor died in 1922 aged eighty-seven.

Scott, however – actually named Jessie Scott – died at home of his wounds on August 12, 1864. Among the others killed at Jenkin's Ferry were William Nelson, Gabriel Myers, William Greenup, and the unfortunate amputee that Ray mentioned in his letter, Thomas Lee.<sup>41</sup> Not all veterans of Milliken's Bend who died in service had been killed on the battlefield. In total, including those killed at Milliken's Bend, the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Cavalry lost sixty-six men between June 1863, and the close of the war. Among these was David Ray's younger brother, John, who fell ill and died early in 1865. Edward Parker, who had been so badly wounded at Milliken's Bend that he was listed as dead, was mortally wounded in a massive Indian raid on Cooke County, Texas in December, 1863. Thus by the time the war drew to a close, the veterans of Milliken's Bend had gone from 715 to less than 650.<sup>42</sup> But cessation of war did not mean that death would leave the remainder untouched during the remainder of the 1860s. The physical memory of the battle from the Confederate side persisted for at least three-quarters of a century.

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<sup>40</sup> David Ray to Dear Mother, May 7, 1864.

<sup>41</sup> Ray, *Roster*, 4-24; David Ray to Dear Mother, May 7, 1864; Find A Grave, database and images (<https://www.findagrave.com> : accessed 15 February 2018), memorial page for Jacob Laban Caylor (22 Apr 1835–8 Jun 1922), Find A Grave Memorial no. 46760528, citing Willow Wild Cemetery, Bonham, Fannin County, Texas, USA ; Maintained by Sandra (contributor 46524408).

<sup>42</sup> Compiled Service Records of the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Cavalry; Ray, *Roster*, 3-24; Blessington, 191; Texas State Library and Archives Commission, Austin, Texas; Confederate Pension Applications, 1899-1975; Collection CPA16526; Roll 2716, Pension File Nos. 05656 to 05705, Application Years 1896 to 1899; E. W. Chambers Diary, April 9, 1864; Yeary, 453; Mrs. Ray to My Dear Son, May 2, 1865; *Snyder Signal*, November 7, 1913; Official Records.

Captain Reubens Coffey of Company B made it all the way until August, 1865. Having journeyed to Dallas County, Texas, he entered a dispute with one H.F.C. Johnson over a horse. The dispute turned violent, and both men were killed. Major William Diamond, who had been shot in the thigh at Milliken's Bend, had moved to Houston after the war and taken up the editorship of a newspaper titled the *Houston Journal*. In 1867, along with a large swath of his family, Diamond contracted and died of yellow fever, an epidemic of which romped across southeast Texas in that year. David Crier, listed as a "loafer" on the 1860 Federal Census, had moved to Bandera County, Texas by 1867. In that year, Crier was returning home through Hondo Canyon, when an arrow struck him in the back. After a wild dash for safety, Crier reached home. The projectile was removed by a local doctor, but Crier died shortly after. Including war dead, the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas had lost eighty-two men by the time the decade of the Civil War ended, leaving the veterans of Milliken's Bend numbering 633.<sup>43</sup>

The 1870s saw nearly forty deaths, seven of which occurred in 1870 alone. Private Nicholas Dawson of Company C met an end similar to David Crier. On July 12, 1870, while investigating the disappearance of one of his horses, Dawson encountered a party of Indians, most likely Comanche. Though he made a rapid attempt to flee, he was

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<sup>43</sup> *Galveston Daily News*, August 29, 1865; *Dallas Herald*, November 2, 1867; J.W. Wilbarger, *Indian Depredations in Texas* (Austin: Hutchings Printing Press, 1890), 529 [Archive.org]; Hunter, J. Martin, *Pioneer History of Bandera County: Seventy-Five Years of Intrepid History* (Bandera: Hunter's Printing House, 1922), 134-35 [Portal to Texas History]; Ray, *Roster*, 4-24; *Denton Record-Chronicle*, July 8, 1971; *Find A Grave*, database and images (<https://www.findagrave.com> : accessed 15 February 2018), memorial page for David C. Hicks (11 Nov 1834–21 Sep 1869), Find A Grave Memorial no. 11394656, citing Oakwood Cemetery, Corsicana, Navarro County, Texas, USA; National Archives and Records Administration (NARA); Washington, D.C.; *Non-population Census Schedules for Texas, 1850-1880*; Archive Collection: *T1134*; Archive Roll Number: 55; Census Year: 1870; Census Place: *Precinct 1, Collin, Texas* hereafter cited as 1870 Federal Death Schedules unless otherwise noted; Ancestry.com. *Texas, County Tax Rolls, 1846-1910* (Provo: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2014) [Online Database]; Ancestry.com. *Texas, Voter Registration Lists, 1867-1869* (Provo: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011) [Online Database].

overtaken and killed.<sup>44</sup> Nor was Dawson the only one to meet a violent end in that decade. The Federal Mortality Schedule for 1870 indicates that Private George M. McDonald of Company A was murdered in the same year. Perhaps the most significant death in that decade, however, was that of the promising young Captain of Company E, William Thomas Green Weaver. Opposed to secession before the Civil War began, Weaver had been a District Judge during Reconstruction, only to be removed by Federal authorities. In 1875, he had served as a delegate to the Texas Constitutional Convention. While there, Weaver broke with tradition by proposing that women's suffrage be included in the new State Constitution. On October 18 of the following year, Weaver found himself suffering from a headache. In order to alleviate it, he took an overly large dose of hydrate of chloral, and died shortly afterward.<sup>45</sup>

The 1880s saw a lower number of deaths, twenty-nine in all. Among those who died was one of the last men to die in violence. Private Uel Music, who had become the Sheriff of Wilbarger County, Texas, was killed attempting to break up a saloon brawl in the town of Vernon in December, 1882. On the whole, the 1880s marked something of a turning point in the ways that the veterans of the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas passed. The youngest men to have served were now in their forties, and the number of violent deaths dropped sharply.<sup>46</sup> The 1890s saw a similar amount of deaths, thirty-six in total. Perhaps the most

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<sup>44</sup> *Denton Record-Chronicle*, July 8, 1971; Findagrave.com; Ray, 4-24; Ancestry.com, U.S., *Confederate Pensions, 1884-1958*, Texas, Confederate Pension Applications, 1899-1975. Austin, Texas: Texas State Library and Archives Commission. Confederate Pension Rolls, Veterans and Widows, hereafter cited as Texas Confederate Pensions unless otherwise noted; Ancestry.com, *U.S. Federal Census Mortality Schedules, 1850-1885* (Provo: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010); Texas County Court (Collin County), Collin County, Texas, Probate Packets, 1846-1915, 1919 [Ancestry.com]; Weeks, Helen. *The Borens: Past and Present* (Slaton: H. Meeks, 1988) 41. See probate of will for Oran Howell.

<sup>45</sup> *Handbook of Texas Online*, Brett J. Derbes, "Weaver, William Thomas Green," accessed March 08, 2018.

<sup>46</sup> Findagrave.com; Ray, 4-24; Wilbarger County Book Committee/Wilbarger County Historical Commission, Sylvia (Jo) Jones, Ed., *Wilbarger County* (Lubbock: Craftsman Printers Inc., 1986), 578;

unusual was Thomas Perry Yeager, who was killed by a lightning strike while picking cotton. One newspaper of the time wryly noted that Yeager's death should not serve as a deterrent to picking cotton.<sup>47</sup> The first decade of the twentieth century, however, saw more deaths among the veterans of Milliken's Bend than had been seen since the war; a grand sum of eighty-seven. Among them was Captain James D. Woods, who had led the regiment at Milliken's Bend after the two Field Officers had been wounded. Woods died on October 16, 1905 while serving in the Twenty-ninth Texas Legislature. Two years later, Captain John Haywood Tolbert, also serving in the Texas Legislature, died. Tolbert had been shot in the abdomen at Milliken's Bend. The Texas House of Representatives unanimously approved a memorial page in their journal to honor him.<sup>48</sup>

A further ninety-one men died between 1910-1919, including George A.

Dickerman, who lost an arm at Milliken's Bend, and William R. Brinley, who lost a leg

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Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, Washington, D.C. National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group T9, hereafter cited as the 1880 Federal Census unless otherwise stated.

<sup>47</sup> *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, September 4, 1891; *Brenham Weekly Banner*, September 10, 1891; Ray, 4-24; Findagrave.com; Ancestry.com, U.S., *Confederate Pensions, 1884-1958*, Texas Confederate Pension Applications; *Galveston Daily News*, September 16, 1895; Ancestry.com, U.S., *Headstone Applications for Military Veterans, 1925-1963* (Provo: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2012); Ron Melugin, *Heroes, Scoundrels and Angels: Fairview Cemetery of Gainesville, Texas* (Charleston: The History Press, 2010), 136.

<sup>48</sup> *Handbook of Texas Online*, Aragorn Storm Miller and R. Matt Abigail, "Woods, James D.," accessed April 07, 2018; Texas House of Representatives, *Journal of the House of Representatives of the Regular Session of the Thirtieth Legislature of Texas: Convened January 3, 1907 and Adjourned Without Day April 13, 1907* (Austin: Von Boeckmann-Jones Company, Printers, 1907), 433; Official Records; *Daily Ardmoreite*, April 2, 1909; Texas State Cemetery, "John J. Miller." [www.cemetery.state.tx.us](http://www.cemetery.state.tx.us), accessed April 7, 2018; Texas State Cemetery, "James M. Cope" [www.cemetery.state.tx.us](http://www.cemetery.state.tx.us), accessed April 7, 2018; Ancestry.com, "Directory of Deceased American Physicians, 1804-1929 [online database]"; Texas Confederate Pension Applications; Findagrave.com; National Cemetery Administration, "U.S. Veterans Gravesites, ca.1775-2006" (Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc., 2006) [Online Database]; Twelfth Census of the United States, Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1900. Publication T623, Record Group 18, hereafter cited as 1900 Federal Census; Pennsylvania Historic and Museum Commission, *Pennsylvania, Death Certificates, 1906-1966*, Certificate Number Range: 078201-081800 [Ancestry.com]; Texas Department of State Health Services, *Texas Death Certificates, 1903-1982* (Provo: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2013); Texas Department of Health, Texas Death Indexes, 1903-2000 [Ancestry.com]. Some deaths are indicated by the last record on which the man in question appears, such as the 1900 Federal Census. Not all deaths had been recorded by death certificates or the Texas Death Index.

there. Yet another was Stephen Findley, who was fatally injured when thrown from a wagon on February 4, 1912.<sup>49</sup> The majority of the regiment had died by the 1920s, leaving only a few dozen survivors. By all indications, the 1920s and 1930s saw only sixty-one survivors of Milliken's Bend from the ranks of the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Cavalry. The last survivor was Private John J. Anderson of Company C, who died in 1938, seventy-five years after the battle. Until that time, one could ask about the battle from a man who had stood on the field itself.<sup>50</sup> Out of 385 surviving veterans, there is one very telling detail. Some went west to New Mexico, Arizona and California, while others moved north to areas like Illinois, Ohio, and as far as Minnesota. Overwhelmingly, though, the men remained in Texas – a grand total, in fact, of 324. Nine moved to Arkansas, twenty-eight to Oklahoma, three to New Mexico, and two to Louisiana; all states that border Texas. In sum, 366 men remained in or near the State from which they had served.<sup>51</sup> Historically

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<sup>49</sup> Compiled Service Records of the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Cavalry; Dickerman, 74-75; Texas Confederate Pension Applications; Thirteenth Census of the United States, Washington D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1910. Roll T624, Record Group 29; Ancestry.com, "California Death Index, 1905-1939" (Online database); Findagrave.com; *Galveston Daily News*, February 5, 1912; *Honey Grove Signal*, October 28, 1910; *Whitewright Sun*, June 21, 1918; Melugin, 69; Ancestry.com, "Web: Missouri Death Certificates, 1910-1962" (Online database); Texas Department of Health, Texas Death Indexes, 1903-2000 [Ancestry.com]; Texas Department of State Health Services, *Texas Death Certificates, 1903-1982* (Provo: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2013); Ancestry.com, *U.S., Headstone Applications for Military Veterans, 1925-1963* (Provo: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2012); National Cemetery Administration, "U.S. Veterans Gravesites, ca.1775-2006" (Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc., 2006) [Online Database].

<sup>50</sup> Ancestry.com, "Arkansas Death Index, 1914-1950" (Online database); Ancestry.com, "California Death Index, 1905-1939" (Online database); Findagrave.com; Montana State Genealogical Society and Ancestry.com, *Montana Death Index, 1907-2007* (Provo: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2009); Texas Department of State Health Services, *Texas Death Certificates, 1903-1982* (Provo: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2013); Texas Department of Health, Texas Death Indexes, 1903-2000 [Ancestry.com]; Ancestry.com, *U.S., Headstone Applications for Military Veterans, 1925-1963* (Provo: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2012); Texas Confederate Pension Applications; Texas State Cemetery, "Jesse B. Renfro," [www.cemetery.state.tx.us](http://www.cemetery.state.tx.us), accessed April 8, 2018.

<sup>51</sup> 1870 Federal Census; 1870 Federal Death Schedules; 1880 Federal Census; 1900 Federal Census; 1910 Federal Census; 1920 Federal Census; Findagrave.com; Arkansas Death Index; California Death Index; Montana Death Index; Texas Death Index; Meeks, 41; Hunter, 134-35; Ray, 4-24; Texas Confederate Pension Applications; Melugin, 43, 69; *Daily Ardmoreite*, April 2, 1909; *Denton Record-Chronicle*, July 8, 1971; *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, September 4, 1891; *Galveston Daily News*, August 29, 1865, November 3, 1867, September 16, 1895, February 5, 1912; *Honey Grove Signal*, October 28, 1910; *Whitewright Sun*, June 21, 1918; Texas County Court (Collin County), Collin County, Texas, Probate Packets, 1846-1915,



speaking, this makes sense. Richard Lowe, taking the wider view of Walker's Texas Division, states that they "considered the protection of their families and communities and social order their highest priority." When in late 1864, the Division was set to be moved east of the Mississippi River, a number of the men defiantly refused, and walked out of the Division's encampment. The much-protested move did not occur.<sup>52</sup>

David Ray of Company G wrote his mother,

There has been a great many desertions...about 50 from this Brigade 200 from Wauls and about the same from [sic] MaClays. We only lost one from this regt another started but was caught, but there are several in the guardhouse for talking about it from our regt; they have a great many in the guardhouse some with irons.<sup>53</sup>

Exactly who those in the guardhouse was is not clear. The service records indicate men under arrest at various times, but none correspond to this period. One thing is clear, however: being close to home was very important to the men of the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Cavalry. Even if the majority of them did not desert, they were still angry enough at the prospect of leaving the defense of their homes that they openly discussed it, and were restrained accordingly.<sup>54</sup> It is little surprise then, that men who so fiercely resisted the idea of leaving their homes exposed would cling to the same soil in the years following the war.

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1919 [Ancestry.com]; Ancestry.com, "Directory of Deceased American Physicians, 1804-1929 [online database]; Missouri Death Certificates; Pennsylvania Death Certificates; Texas Death Certificates; Ancestry.com. Texas, County Tax Rolls, 1846-1910 (Provo: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2014) [Online Database]; *Handbook of Texas Online*, Aragorn Storm Miller and R. Matt Abigail, "Woods, James D.," accessed April 07, 2018; *Handbook of Texas Online*, Brett J. Derbes, "Weaver, William Thomas Green," accessed March 08, 2018; Texas House of Representatives, 433; National Cemetery Administration, "U.S. Veterans Gravesites, ca.1775-2006" (Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc., 2006) [Online Database]; Ancestry.com, *U.S., Headstone Applications for Military Veterans, 1925-1963* (Provo: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2012); Texas Confederate Pension Applications; Texas State Cemetery, "Jesse B. Renfro," [www.cemetery.state.tx.us](http://www.cemetery.state.tx.us), accessed April 8, 2018; Texas State Cemetery, "John J. Miller," [www.cemetery.state.tx.us](http://www.cemetery.state.tx.us), accessed April 7, 2018; Texas State Cemetery, "James M. Cope," [www.cemetery.state.tx.us](http://www.cemetery.state.tx.us), accessed April 7, 2018

<sup>52</sup> Lowe, 236-39, 258;

<sup>53</sup> David Ray to Dear Mother, August 24, 1864.

<sup>54</sup> Compiled Service Records of the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Cavalry.

For some, coming home was no doubt sweet, seeing loved ones, wives, children, parents, and so on, but the same could not be said for all.

Men like George Dickerman, who lost one arm, and had the other disabled, had a harder time adjusting. Dickerman, a “wounded warrior,” was elected to office in Texas before he had fully adjusted to writing with a “maimed left hand.” A carpenter before the war, Dickerman was forced to find another field in which to work, and so “engaged in the newspaper business, in which I did well.” Historian Brian Craig Miller recorded that Civil War officers would often resist amputation, though being a tradesman, it is not likely that Dickerman felt the same stigma as some officers from the upper classes. Miller wrote of amputation that “The removal of a limb unleashed a plethora of emotions and reactions, including depression, anxiety, self-pity or resignation, and peacefulness that they had survived such a traumatic ordeal.”<sup>55</sup> There is no record of Dickerman’s homecoming, but he seems to have adjusted well. One telling item from later life, though, is a portrait of Dickerman in a book on the history of Grayson County, Texas. Staring straight into the camera, his bespectacled face bears a grieved expression. Though he is only visible from slightly below his shoulders, it is evident that he has moved his left side toward the camera, either consciously or unconsciously hiding his missing limb.<sup>56</sup> Dickerman was joined in his recovery by other men like William Brinley, who had lost a leg at Milliken’s Bend. Thirty-six years after the battle, in 1899, now aged sixty, Brinley applied for a Confederate pension from the State of Texas. On his application he wrote, “I am not at all able to earn my living.” The reason given was that “my leg was shot off

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<sup>55</sup> Dickerman, 74-75; Brian Craig Miller. *Empty Sleeves: Amputation in the Civil War South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2015), 52.

<sup>56</sup> Graham Landrum. *Grayson County: An Illustrated History of Grayson County, Texas* (Fort Worth: University Supply & Equipment Company, 1960), 111.

in the Confederate army.” The examining physician’s statement reveals that the amputation took off Brinley’s right leg “just below the hip.”<sup>57</sup> Miller also writes that “The amputated men who returned home to their wives and children struggled financially, largely because of their disabilities. Disabled men faced chronic health issues, usually related to their amputation or other nagging wounds that sent many to an early grave.” Among these appears to be George “Dad” Holloway of Company C. His name is found on the regiment rosters, and in later volumes, but he appears in no public records following the war. David Ray revealed that Holloway lost an arm at Milliken’s Bend. After this injury, he appears to have vanished.<sup>58</sup>

Not all wounds left a physical mark, but they were every bit as painful, and could be just as obvious. Captain William Weaver, while attending the Texas Constitutional Convention of 1875, was often documented in the papers. An upstanding citizen by all accounts before the war, Weaver’s behavior during the convention raised eyebrows. On September 24, 1875, the *Galveston Daily News* reported

We had been reliably informed that Judge Weaver became intoxicated at Dallas, while on his way to Austin, and remained in that condition for several days, but thought best to withhold the information hoping that he would get sober and go to work. Our correspondent writes, however, that the member from Cooke [County] is still patronizing the saloons, and remains absent from the convention without leave.<sup>59</sup>

Nor were the papers of Weaver’s lifetime the only source of such information. Ron Melugin, a local historian of Cooke County, Texas, wrote that Weaver suffered from alcoholism; an addiction that cost Weaver his marriage, and which does not appear to

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<sup>57</sup> Texas Confederate Pension Applications.

<sup>58</sup> Miller, 111-12; Ray 9; Compiled Service Records of the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Cavalry.

<sup>59</sup> *Galveston Daily News*, September 24, 1875.

have been an issue prior to the war.<sup>60</sup> Weaver's temperament seems to have been somewhat volatile during this period, as well. When charged by an Austin newspaper of being "in bed" with another member of the Convention, Weaver at once exploded, and alluded to his Civil War service. "Now, sir, this is false," Weaver protested. "I have not slept with a man in years – never did, only when I was conscripted into the Confederate army, and never intend to sleep with another man if I freeze."<sup>61</sup> The impression given of his service is not a favorable one, even if his protest was an attempt at humor, nor does his service record support his having been conscripted. Quite contrarily, it indicates that he was enlisted by William Fitzhugh on February 21, 1862.<sup>62</sup> This would seem to indicate that Weaver did not look fondly on his time in the Confederate Army. He had experienced horrors at Milliken's Bend, and on four other battlefields. Little wonder, then, that he, like so many other veterans, sought refuge in a bottle.

Private William Smithey of Company B, suffering from old age, among other things, and unable to perform physical labor, applied for a tax exemption as a peddler in 1897. Among the things that may have hampered him in his everyday life was the loss of a finger during the war.<sup>63</sup> Lieutenant Dudley Waddill, who had been badly wounded at Milliken's Bend, moved far away from the location where he had gone to war. Having enlisted in Collin County, Texas, he moved across the State to El Paso, where he spent his last years as a grocer.<sup>64</sup> It was not only physical health that was affected by the war. Men of substance and prominence before the war found themselves all but penniless

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<sup>60</sup> Melugin, 36-37.

<sup>61</sup> *Austin Weekly Statesman*, November 4, 1875.

<sup>62</sup> Compiled Service Records of the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Cavalry.

<sup>63</sup> Jas Chermon to Whom It May Concern, September 25, 1897; *Bonham News*, December 9, 1913.

<sup>64</sup> *El Paso Herald*, February 19, 1898, May 2, 1904.

afterward. Captain Frank M. Dougherty of Company A was a merchant in Gainesville, Texas in 1860. In that year, the Federal Census listed him as having a personal fortune of \$10,000, and real estate worth \$3,500. In 1870, five years after the war ended, Dougherty's real estate holdings had increased by a thousand dollars. His personal fortune, though, had dwindled to a mere \$500.<sup>65</sup> Historian Jeffrey W. McClurken notes that this was not an unusual occurrence. A study of one county in Virginia cited by McClurken indicates that "the total value of real and personal property per veteran family household from 1860 to 1870 declined...almost 82 percent."<sup>66</sup>

Likewise, Captain David Rhine, the regiment's Quartermaster and himself a Gainesville merchant, was found on the 1860 Federal Census with real estate worth \$2,500, and personal wealth of \$12,000. By 1870, he had removed to Bonham, in Fannin County, where he owned no real estate whatsoever, and possessed only \$3,000. Conversely, there were men who were able to recover quickly. William T. G. Weaver, a lawyer by profession, had a combined total of \$400 in personal and real estate in 1860. By 1870, Weaver's fortune had grown to \$6,500.<sup>67</sup> It is to be expected that some men would recover not only better, but more quickly than others. Some, like the unfortunate George Holloway, do not seem to have ever recovered. The same could be argued for Weaver, who, though never physically wounded, nursed his injured psyche with alcohol. It is to be wondered how many others from the regiment faced this same set of personal demons. The postwar fate of a large number of the veterans of Milliken's Bend in the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Cavalry remain a mystery. It is unknown when, where, and how they died, if they

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<sup>65</sup> 1860 Federal Census; 1870 Federal Census;

<sup>66</sup> Jeffrey W. McClurken. *Take Care of the Living Reconstructing Confederate Veteran Families in Virginia* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009), 46.

<sup>67</sup> Compiled Service Records of the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Cavalry; 1860 Federal Census; 1870 Federal Census.

recovered quickly or slowly, or indeed, if they did at all. These are voices that can no longer speak, simply lost to time, and of those who are accounted for, few have left first-hand accounts.

This necessarily leads to the question, what memories did the men leave behind in their later years? Andrew Jackson Lucas wrote “at Milliken’s Bend, on the Mississippi River – we fought negroes and our regiment lost eighty men. I don’t know how many negroes were killed, but they were strewn for half a mile.” John M. Wright recalled that “in going through a rose fence we lost nine men, but when we did get through we made it hot for those negroes.” John Scott recalled

Captain J. M. Lindsay of Gainesville, was the first with his own sword to cut through the hedge and at the risk of his life...lead the Texans on to that dread levee, through fire and blood into the jaws of death, into the jaws of hell – a sheet of flame greeting them from the rifles of the negro troops.<sup>68</sup>

Another veteran of the 16<sup>th</sup>, John Hendrex, wrote,

This engagement was for awhile hand to hand.... [sic] McCullough Brigade lost heavily, could for some distance walk on dead men. Most of the Federals were negroes who lay in piles up and down the breastworks, many pinned to the ground with bayonets....We captured quite a lot of negroes and the Federal dead and wounded was by far greater than ours.<sup>69</sup>

Other veterans of the 16<sup>th</sup> merely mentioned that they had been there. Others who had undoubtedly been there, like J. B. Briscoe and W. H. Coppage, mentioned other portions of their service, but left out Milliken’s Bend. John W. Connelly of Company G detailed the battle, but in no place mentioned that the enemy he faced were black men in blue.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> *Sherman Daily Register*, October 13, 1900.

<sup>69</sup> Collin Chronicles, 33.

<sup>70</sup> Yeary, 82, 153, 453, 715, 729, & 823; Connelly Memoirs, 179.

There are very few post-war memories of Milliken's Bend shared by the men of the 16<sup>th</sup>. The above instances show three reactions to the battle. In the first reaction, men insisted that they dominated the field. The second reaction was merely to mention that they were there, and the third is to overlook the battle entirely. B. G. Goodrich, a veteran from the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Infantry wrote,

We never knew the strength of the Federals. The greater part of them were negroes. With their usual disregard of truth, the Yankees accused us of shouting "No quarter," but the Sixteenth Infantry captured an entire company of negroes.<sup>71</sup>

The reason given for this statement was that the author had not seen another publication dealing with Milliken's Bend.<sup>72</sup> This is significant, because Goodrich's words seem to indicate that he wished to indicate the truth of the battle as he saw it. He clearly wished to make sure that the battle was remembered, but also to ensure that it was remembered "correctly." Another Texan trooper who was there that bloody day, J. H. Pillow of the 17<sup>th</sup> Infantry, wrote rather sardonically that he

...saw a statement from Gen. Thomas boasting of the gallantry of his negro troops. He said that a superior force of rebels charged furiously up to the levee and got soundly whipped by undisciplined negroes. The truth is that we ran them to their gunboats and held our ground till all our wounded were taken off the field. If that is counted as a victory for the Federals I can't wonder that it has been said that he never lost a battle.<sup>73</sup>

All of the accounts given at any significant length from the Confederates insist that they dominated the field at Milliken's Bend. All of these accounts, from Lucas, Wright, Hendrex, Connelly, Scott, Goodrich, and Pillow agree on the point that the

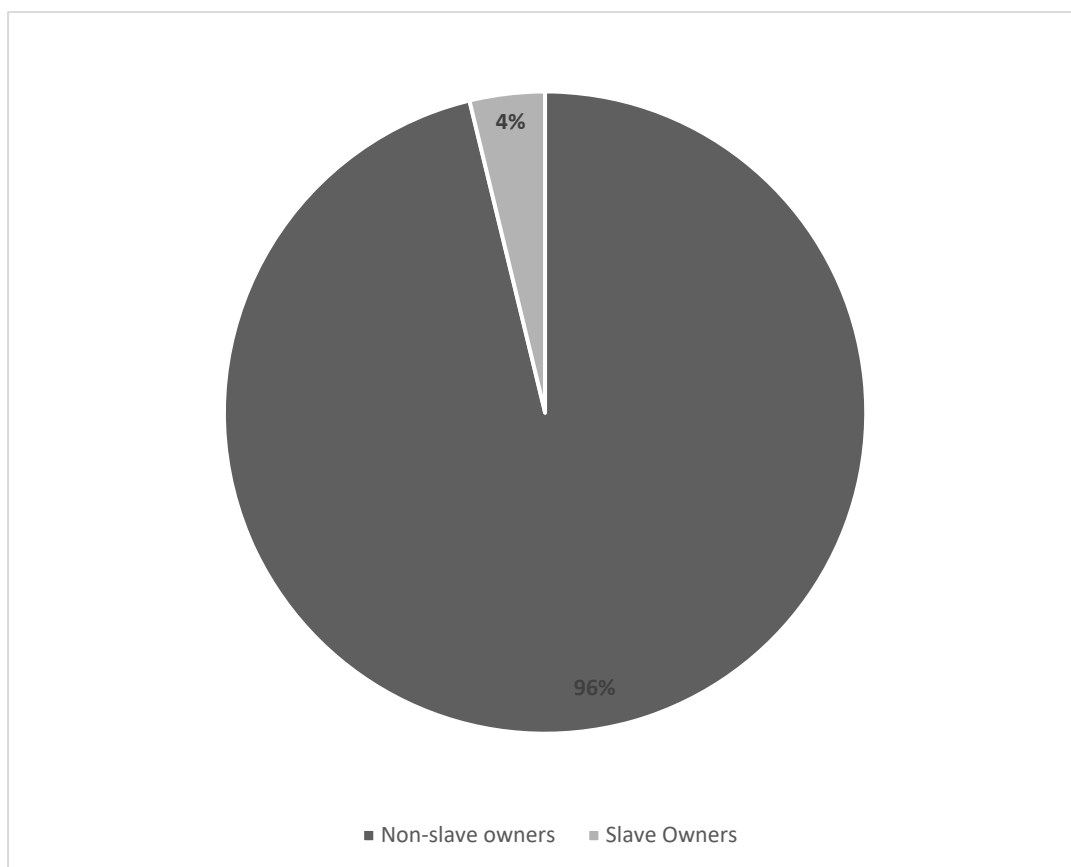
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<sup>71</sup> B.G. Goodrich, "The Battle of Millican's Bend," *Confederate Veteran Magazine*, Volume 28, February, 1900, 67.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Yeary, 609-10.

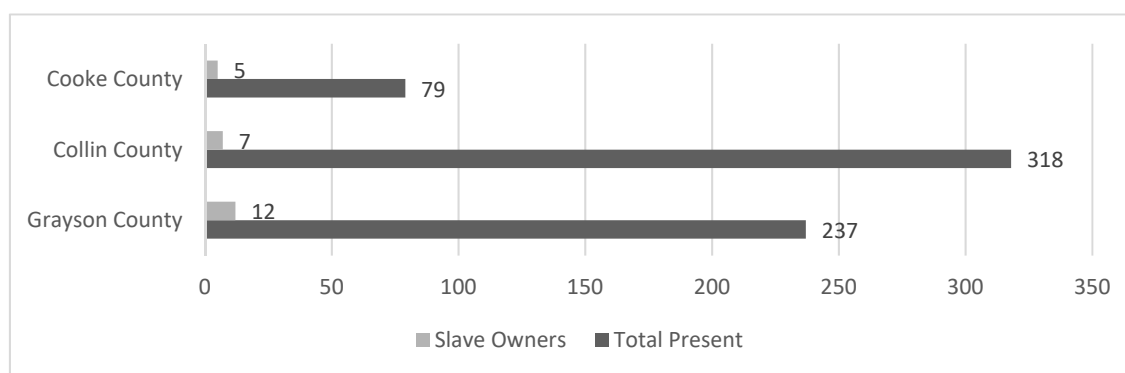
mightier force at Milliken's Bend had been theirs. Yes, they had suffered their own losses, but they had inflicted worse. They pierced men through to the ground with bayonets, they left them in such piles that they could walk on the dead, and they took prisoners by the score. As subsequent chapters will show, this narrative is not without merit. However, the post-war narrative seems to have been a response to Federal claims of victory. For men who had driven a foe from the field, and not allowed the enemy to reclaim it until they had withdrawn, this must indeed have been bitter. None of them mentioned race as a factor, aside from having stated that they fought black troops, most commonly stated as "negroes," at Milliken's Bend.



*Figure 2.1.* Percentages of Slave Ownership in the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Cavalry.



Their post-war years do not seem to have been consumed with consideration of Milliken's Bend, but there is evidence to suggest what some of them may have thought of the men against whom they fought in that engagement. Among the men who fought at Milliken's Bend, slave ownership appears to have been fairly low. The 1860 Federal Slave Schedules indicate five slave owners from Cooke County, seven from Collin County, and twelve from Grayson County. This amounts to twenty-four men out of the



*Figure 2.2.* Slave ownership by County in Soldiers of the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Cavalry.

634 that fought at Milliken's Bend, a number amounting to less than five percent of the total men present (see Figures 2.1 and 2.2).<sup>74</sup> In Cooke County, this included Captain Frank M. Dougherty, Sergeant Robert B. Titus, Corporal Thomas Wright, Private John W. Martin, and Private B. V. Wheeler. In Collin County, slave owners included Captain John W. Kalfus, Captain Frederick L. Gates, Sergeant George W. Simmons, Private Robert W. Taylor, Private John Poindexter, and Private John T. Parker. Finally, in Grayson County, slave owners included Major William Diamond, Captain James D. Woods, Captain Lee Goff, Surgeon William Head, Lieutenant Francis Chaney, Sergeant

<sup>74</sup> 1860 Federal Census; Eighth Census of the United States, 1860 United States Federal Slave Schedules, National Archives and Records Administration, Publication M653. These numbers include men from slave-owning households, whose names correspond to families in the specified areas on the 1860 Federal Census.

Benjamin DeSpain, Sergeant Thomas J. Jarboe, Sergeant John Ray, and his brothers David and Oliver, Private Edgar Wimberly, and Private Hamilton Douglass.<sup>75</sup>

In fact, there is only one soldier whose post-war activities hint at his attitude toward race. Captain Frederick Gates, a native of New York, moved to Louisiana after the war, and almost immediately became a Judge. Gates' attitude toward Reconstruction itself became obvious as early as 1868. In that year, the *Times-Picayune* recorded "Judge Fred Gates of St. Martin refuses to give place to Train, Radical, who was elected Judge at the last election, on the plea that reconstruction laws are unconstitutional."<sup>76</sup> The papers are largely silent on Gates following this until shortly before his death in 1897. The *Lafayette Gazette* touted Gates in 1896 as "'the exterminator of negroism in the 19th judicial district.'" The article went on to describe him as having "saved that district from the incompetent rule of radicalism," and concluded by stating that the white people of that district owed him thanks.<sup>77</sup> On announcing Gates' death in 1897, the *Lafayette Gazette* wrote at length of Gates' efforts against blacks in his State.

[Gates] was just to the negro, but he was one of those who believed, that Sambo was not the proper person into whose hands the reins of government should be placed. He led the movement which resulted in the establishment of white supremacy in Iberia Parish.... There was one thing which Judge Gates would not stand, and that was the negro in politics. When, in the State Legislature, he was speaking on some issue that had come up for discussion an oily-skinned darky who represented one of the river parishes interrupted him with some frivolous question. He turned toward the colored lawgiver and in language that was both forcible and eloquent made him distinctly understand that no such impudence would be tolerated.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> 1860 Federal Census; Eighth Census of the United States, 1860 United States Federal Slave Schedules, National Archives and Records Administration, Publication M653; Compiled Service Records of the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Cavalry.

<sup>76</sup> *Times-Picayune*, August 7, 1868; *Thibodaux Sentinel*, July 21, 1866; *Baton Rouge Tri-Weekly Gazette and Comet*, March 31, 1866.

<sup>77</sup> *Lafayette Gazette*, February 8, 1896.

<sup>78</sup> *Lafayette Gazette*, June 5, 1897.

This legacy does not reflect well on Gates now. As the sole member of the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Cavalry for whom such material is available, however, it does not provide much of a basis for a declaration on the racial attitudes of the other veterans of Milliken's Bend. As can be seen from the previous statements from surviving veterans of Milliken's Bend in their later years, they do not denigrate the black troops whom they fought. By contrast, Joseph Blessington, who fought in the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Infantry, and had only a marginal involvement in the battle, described the men of the African Brigade as "Uncle Sam's colored pets."<sup>79</sup> In describing their experiences, not one man of the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Cavalry who fought at Milliken's Bend says a single negative word about their opponents. The bloody work on the levee may well have earned the blue-uniformed combatants a measure of respect from their Confederate foes. Blessington never crossed bayonets with the men of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana, let alone set foot on the levee while the battle raged. By his own admission, his regiment was held in reserve.<sup>80</sup> Bearing that in mind, it must be recognized that Blessington's experience differed vastly from his comrades in the very same battle. With that difference of experience, Blessington could not have had the same respect for the men of the African Brigade. He had not witnessed with his own eyes their ferocity, nor with his flesh felt their lead and steel, nor yet the hammer-blows of their clubbed guns. The men of Fitzhugh's Regiment had experienced all of these phenomena, and so their post-war perspective was bound to be different. It is possible to infer what attitudes toward race may have been, in that many of the men remained silent on the issue. At the same time, silence may not be the most accurate gauge toward racial attitude, since only a few men in the regiment recorded their experiences at all.

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<sup>79</sup> Blessington, 99.

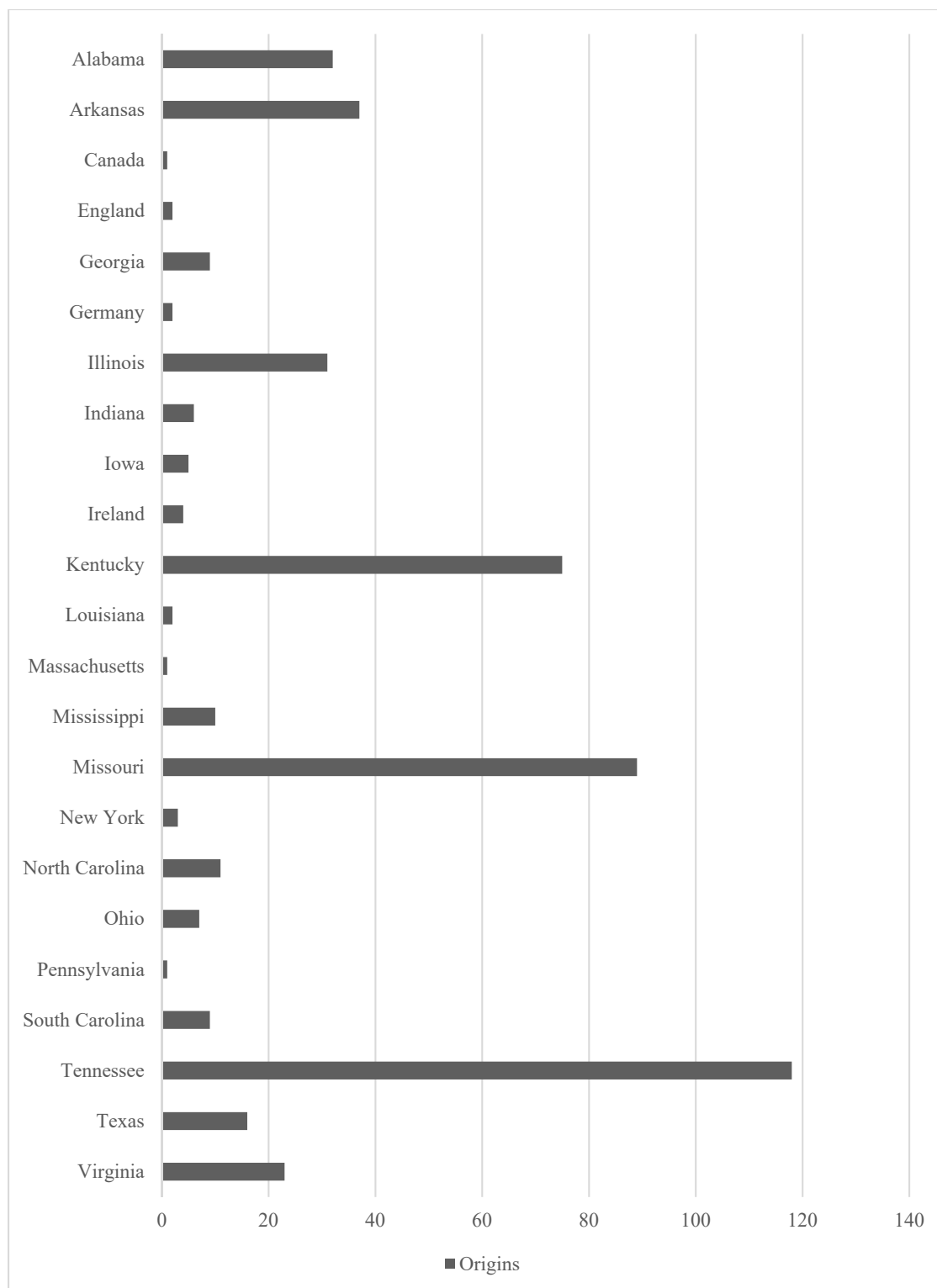
<sup>80</sup> Ibid, 97-98.

The men themselves were of various origin and experience. For being a “Texas” regiment, a mere sixteen men had been born there. Others came from as far away as Ireland and Germany (see figure 2.3). Approximately one-third of the combatants were farmers. The majority of the others were tradesmen, such as carpenters, teamsters, blacksmiths, and laborers. Very few had what today would be termed, “white-collar” professions. A few were clerks, some merchants, physicians, and even lawyers. The last of these includes the three men who led the 16<sup>th</sup> at Milliken’s Bend, Edward Gregg, William Diamond, and James Woods.<sup>81</sup> The men themselves were common men, few of them slaveholders, as has been shown. Yet, whatever their thoughts or opinions were about black men prior to Milliken’s Bend, the battle seems to have left an impression on them, though men like Captain Gates do not appear to have taken the battle’s lessons to heart. How deep that impression ran is much more difficult to determine.

Like the disgraced Lieutenant Russell of Company E, it is known that something at Milliken’s Bend affected the men of the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Cavalry, even in how they referred to themselves. Exactly what that something was is akin to Lieutenant Kilgore, in that it is hard to trace. It was a battle that left many of them with scars both physical and mental, yet it was one in which they took pride. Some would say without reservation what had taken place where, while others would merely say that they were there, or abstain from putting a face on the enemy.

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<sup>81</sup> Compiled Service Records of the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Cavalry; 1860 Federal Census; Collin Chronicles, 31.



*Figure 2.3.* Origins of the men of the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Cavalry at Milliken's Bend.

It was one of the hardest battles in which they took part, and so far as first-hand accounts go, one of the best recorded. As has been shown, one could ask a veteran of the 16<sup>th</sup> about the battle for seventy-five years afterward. What appears evident from those that did record their experience is that they wanted it known that they had been the dominant force in the battle, even if they had been forced to quit the field. Their immediate reactions seem to have been shaped by their superiors, as in the case of John Bryan's self-censorship.

Whatever the case, all evidence seems to suggest that they were proud of their service in the engagement. Perhaps they were proud that they had survived the meat grinder of hand-to-hand combat. Or perhaps for the first time, Milliken's Bend made them consider that men they had disregarded as inferior, might in fact be their equals. The men are largely silent on this point, which may indicate that it was something which they did not care to record. Men like John Bryan and Addison Clark recalled having fought black soldiers soon after the battle. Since Bryan did not survive the war, it is impossible to say if he would have done so afterward. Addison Clark, so far as can be determined, never spoke of the war again. Others like Andrew Lucas and John M. Wright recalled fighting black men years after the war, but most others who recorded their service simply recorded being there.<sup>82</sup> This silence on the nature of the enemy may indicate an unwillingness to speak about the incident – one in which black men had proven their equals in combat. With the scant numbers of men who recounted their experiences at Milliken's Bend, it is difficult to make this determination. Perhaps they simply chose to remain silent. Certainly men like Frederick Gates would not have spoken

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<sup>82</sup> J.S. Bryan to Dear Nancy, July 4, 1863; A. Clark to Rand Dear Brother, July 17, 1863; Yeary, 453, 823.

of them in terms of equality. What is certain is that after Milliken's Bend, they could not dismiss black manhood as easily as they may have before. Whether the grudging respect they seemed to feel for their opponents at Milliken's Bend extended to African Americans on the whole is less certain.

In veterans like Gates, it may well have heightened the feeling that black men needed to be put in their place, which he apparently did with all the vitriol he could summon. For those whose public influence was not as great as Gates, it is possible that they may have felt the same way. A comprehensive examination of racial violence in their areas during their known lifespans would likely provide better information. At this time, however, there is insufficient data to indicate if Gates' post-war attitude was the standard among veterans of the 16<sup>th</sup>, or if the respect earned by the men of the African Brigade that bloody June day made a more lasting impact on their foes.

### CHAPTER III: THE 11<sup>TH</sup> LOUISIANA INFANTRY, AFRICAN DESCENT

Chief Surgeon Sylvester Lanning of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry, African Descent, was in the very place one would expect to find him; in the regimental hospital treating patients. There is nothing very unusual in this, except for the manner in which he was treating them. One of his patients asked Lanning for some crackers. “No,” Lanning snapped, cursing him, “you have been here long enough. I wish to God you would die.” The good doctor had also been reported to have struck his own servant with a blunt object. The force of the blow had knocked the unfortunate man to the floor, and put a hole in his head, according to Colonel Van E. Young. Lanning resigned in 1863, the same year in which the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry, African Descent, was formed. In an examination of a regiment of the United States Colored Troops, it may seem odd to begin with the white officers who commanded it. However, the terms of service of those officers, as well as their quality as men in authority likely played an important part in the attitudes of the men. Colonel Young wrote that he endorsed Lanning’s resignation because of “a general want of sympathy and intent in the service and harsh and cruel conduct towards the patients and attendants in the hospital.” Lanning’s response was an indignant one, and it showed sympathy only for his own reputation. Lanning claimed to have “never in any way been harsh except in language,” and defended the violence against his servant as having been “provoked.” It also seemed to make a difference to Lanning that his servant was a personal one, and not part of the army. To Van E. Young, however, Lanning’s conduct was “conduct unbecoming an officer and highly detrimental to the welfare of the men.”<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Compiled Service Records of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry, African Descent. See resignation of Sylvester Lanning.



On this point, Colonel Young was undoubtedly correct. It is also a testament to his character that he would not see the men of his command receive such treatment. Yet not all officers of the regiment seemed to have cared. Nor was harsh, even brutal treatment of black soldiers unique to the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana. Historian James G. Hollandsworth, Jr., related the story of how, in December, 1862, a soldier in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Louisiana Native Guards, a black regiment, did not respond with sufficient speed to an order from his Captain, Emile Detiége. The incensed Detiége seized and shook him. When the soldier protested, Detiége shook him twice more. The young recruit, Joseph DeGruy, placed his hand on the Captain's face and pushed him back. The enraged officer drew his pistol and shot DeGruy twice, killing him. Though the details are not given in his service record, it appears that Private King George of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana may have met a similar fate in 1865. The description given is that George "died of wounds received while resisting arrest," with no further information provided.<sup>84</sup> While accounts of such extreme brutality are rare in the records of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana, the following pages, and an examination of the officers of the regiment will demonstrate that the experience was anything but pleasant for the regiment's enlisted men. The service records of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry indicate that there were thirty-two officers present at the battle of Milliken's Bend. Three were killed on the field, and the unfortunate Lieutenant George Conn was taken prisoner and later executed by Confederate authorities. Nevertheless, these thirty-two officers had seen the tenacity and fury with which their new charges could fight. It should have been inspiring. Yet by the time the regiment was mustered out

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<sup>84</sup> James G. Hollandsworth, Jr., *The Louisiana Native Guards: The Black Military Experience During the Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995), 37-38; Compiled Service Records of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry, African Descent.

on March 22, 1866, only six of those original officers remained. Ten of them, including Doctor Lanning, had resigned before the end of 1863. The remaining eleven had resigned by the end of 1864. This left Captains James Hall, William Griffin, Lester Hubbard, and Frank Orm, as well as Lieutenant Colonel Cyrus Sears and Captain – later Major – Thomas Free, as witnesses to the fighting worth of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana. The regiment was involved in one more battle at Waterproof, Louisiana, on February 13, 1864, when a detachment of Confederate cavalry attacked the outpost where they were stationed. Far from being the bloodbath that Milliken’s Bend had been, only a few men of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana were killed at Waterproof, including five veterans of the earlier battle. Assistance from a Federal gunboat threw the Confederate ranks into confusion, and they quickly fled. The engagement was hardly an occasion in which to further prove the 11<sup>th</sup>’s mettle, and a third of the officers who had seen it were gone.<sup>85</sup>

A number of officers who resigned did so on account of sickness, including Captain Andrew Hacker. Hacker resigned in late 1864, citing ill health. His resignation was accepted in October, 1864, and he seemingly returned home, but died on March 6, 1865. Similarly, Captain John W. Abbot of Company A, wounded in the leg at Milliken’s Bend, resigned on account of his injury, and died in 1872. Others, like Sylvester Lanning, left the service for quite different reasons. Lieutenant Joseph Locke of Company C, for instance, set a very poor example of discipline for his men. Court martial charges in Locke’s service record show that he frequently absented himself from camp without permission, and had been conducting an illicit relationship with a black woman identified as “Easter or Anna.” While the affair had become “the scandal of the camp,” the final

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<sup>85</sup> Compiled Service Records of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry, African Descent; Barnickel, 129-131; Winters, 323-24.

straw from Locke seems to have been his response to an inquiry from the regiment's Adjutant. Locke had absented himself from dress parade at Snyder's Bluff, Mississippi on February 12, 1864. When the Colonel commanding instructed the Adjutant to inquire into Locke's absence, the latter officer sent a messenger to Locke requesting an explanation. "Tell the Adjutant to shove it," Locke responded. "Tell the Adjutant to kiss my...royal, star spangled, jolly old arsehole." Records indicate that the ill-tempered officer found himself in arrest the same day, but was allowed to resign unconditionally.<sup>86</sup>

Lieutenant Francis E. Collins of Company A hardly set a better example. The Irish-born officer showed some promise, as on June 28, 1863, he was appointed the acting Quartermaster of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana, and a month later, acting Adjutant. In between these two temporary promotions, however, Colonel Cyrus Sears found himself ordered to arrest Collins for "having used insulting language and manners toward an unprotected female," and "being guilty of falsehood to his superior officers and...other acts." Collins was temporarily sent back to his previous post as Quartermaster Sergeant in the 4<sup>th</sup> Minnesota Infantry, but was reinstated in the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana on July 24, 1863, by order of General U.S. Grant. On February 14, 1864, for reasons that are not immediately clear, Collins tendered his resignation, "unconditional and immediate." Collins was careful to state that he was not indebted to the United States, and therefore had no debts to pay. What he neglected to mention was that he was indebted to two men of his regiment, a fact disclosed by his former Colonel, Van E. Young, in April of the same

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<sup>86</sup> Compiled Service Records of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry, African Descent; Findagrave.com; Ancestry.com. *Web: Illinois, Databases of Illinois Veterans Index, 1775-1995*. Provo: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2015. See also findagrave.com memorial ID 9332274 for Andrew Hacker. The court martial charges in Locke's service record do not identify the Colonel commanding or the Adjutant. At the time stated, however, the Colonel was most likely Van E. Young.

year. Colonel Young had requested that Collins' pay be docked the amount due, and the funds given to the men in question. Collins, however, had already drawn his pay, and thus shirked his debts.<sup>87</sup> As irked as Collins' lenders must have been, the actions of another officer had far more immediate results on and implications for the rank and file of the 11<sup>th</sup>.

On June 13, 1864, sixteen veterans of Milliken's Bend, all belonging to Company F, marched in an orderly fashion to the tent of their Captain, James P. Hall. Their intent was to obtain better treatment from Captain Hall, who had personally cleaned out spoiled food and other detritus from their tent the day before. Historian Linda Barnickel writes of this incident, and claims that Captain Hall's actions were merely the latest in a series of events which the men felt infringed upon their freedom. The genesis of this small rebellion probably lay in an easily overlooked, but significant disciplinary action in September or October, 1863. The service records do not specify in which month the incident occurred, but with the exception of two men, the entirety of Company F was fined thirty-two cents per man for the loss of hat ornaments. The regularity of such occurrences will be discussed later in this chapter, but for the men of Company F, this was the first time it had occurred. For men who had worked all their lives without compensation for their labor, it is hard to imagine a more jarring incident than to suddenly have any portion of those hard-earned wages withheld. Small wonder then, if such repeated "violations" occurred up until the following June, the men must indeed have been boiling over with the sense of injustice. The service records indicate that some, though not all men, were fined similarly going forward for other items lost. Upon

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<sup>87</sup> Compiled Service Records of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry; 1860 Federal Census. See papers in service record of Francis E. Collins.

reaching Captain Hall's tent, the men stacked their arms and tried to negotiate for better treatment by refusing to comply with any further orders. Instead of receiving the improvement of conditions for which they had hoped, they found themselves under arrest for mutiny, and facing court martial. Sergeant Giles Simms and Private Fontine Washington were sentenced to death by firing squad on August 4, 1864. The two were then executed on September 25. The remainder, save one, were sentenced to life in prison, and sent to Alton, Illinois, where the men of the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Cavalry, captured a Richmond a week after Milliken's Bend, were sent. Robert Randall, arguably the most fortunate of the group, was sentenced to imprisonment for the remainder of his service with a ball and chain attached to his leg. All of those not executed had their sentences commuted in 1865, but for Privates Hector Marbly and Price Warfield, the act of mercy came too late. The two men died of smallpox at Alton before they could return to duty, ironically, meeting the same fate as Rush Torbitt of the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Cavalry, whom they had faced at Milliken's Bend.<sup>88</sup>

The message to the men of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana was clear. Nor was this the only such incident in the United States Colored Troops. Sergeant William Walker of the 3<sup>rd</sup> South Carolina Colored Infantry was executed for mutiny, after he and men of his company had stacked arms in front of their Commanding Officer's tent, demanding equal pay. When informed that their actions were against regulations, and told to return to their tents with their arms, Walker and the others merely returned to their tents, leaving their weapons where they lay. Walker was arrested and charged with inciting mutiny. A firing

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<sup>88</sup> Barnickel, 153-56; Compiled Service Records of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry, African Descent; Compiled Service Records of the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Cavalry.

squad ended his life on February 29, 1864.<sup>89</sup> There was to be no negotiation for better treatment. The officers would not change their patterns of behavior out of sympathy or respect. While some men, including Cyrus Sears, believed in their quality as soldiers, the post-war writings and speeches of the officers reveal their true feelings toward the men they commanded. Captain Lester Hubbard, in his book *The Coming Climax in the Destinies of America*, wrote of the issue of emancipation as a cause of war that,

The enfranchisement of the negro was an accident of war, an unpremeditated result, and northern claim to it as the primary philanthropic motive of the war, is destitute of all validity. The war of the rebellion merely decided that when a nation with slaves fights one without any, the human chattels are liable to be lost as spoil of battle.<sup>90</sup>

Hubbard goes on to describe slavery as a “national offense in the eyes of God,” and seems disgusted by the number of slaves returned to their masters, after having fled to Union lines for safety. Yet he says nothing about their qualities as soldiers. Hubbard’s service record indicates that he commanded his Company in the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana for nearly three years. He had lived, worked, and drilled alongside black soldiers for the entirety of that time. Yet when describing them, for all his anti-slavery sentiment, they were merely “chattel” in his eyes. Similarly, Colonel Cyrus Sears, speaking many years after the battle, stated,

Milliken’s Bend was, I believe, the first battle in which “contraband troops” fought *alone*.... To ignore the debt we owe them – under the code of common humanity – for services rendered in saving the Union, we owe our negro citizens a very large debt, which we have

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<sup>89</sup> Edwin S. Redkey, Ed., *A Grand Army of Black Men* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 229-30.

<sup>90</sup> Lester C. Hubbard, *The Coming Climax in the Destinies of America* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr & Co, 1891), 18.

been paying only in the coin of broken promises, inhuman neglect and barbarous abuse.<sup>91</sup>

Yet only two pages later, in complaining of the lawless and violent condition of the nation, Sears wrote, “I plead for whites more than blacks. Undoubtedly our injustice by commission and omission, to the blacks, is at least a very large source of the demoralization whence our disregard of law and justice has sprung.”<sup>92</sup> In essence, however high his sympathies ran for black Americans facing the failure of Reconstruction, his deepest sympathies did not lie with them. It must be taken into account that Sears and the other officers likely knew little about the pre-war lives of their men, aside from the fact that they had been slaves. Had they taken the time to learn, perhaps their sentiments would have been different. In death, too, the officers of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana found ways to deny that they had served in the United States Colored Troops. Out of eighteen officers, only four credited the 11<sup>th</sup>, later the 49<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Infantry, either in their obituaries or on their tombstones. The graves of Colonel Cyrus Sears, Captain William Spangler, Captain Peter Wood, and Lieutenant Albert Bates all have grave markers that identify them with the 49<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Infantry. Colonel Edwin Chamberlain has no military marker, as is the case with seven other officers. The remainder, John W. Abbott, Eli Griffith, Sylvester Lanning, J.W. Stanfield, Jonathan Pickerl, and Augustus Pintler, all identify having served in the Union army,

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid; Compiled Service Records of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry, African Descent; Cyrus Sears, *The Battle of Milliken's Bend: A Paper Read Before the Ohio Commandery of the Loyal Legion, Oct. 7<sup>th</sup>, 1908* (Columbus: F. J. Heer Printing Co., 1909) 21.

<sup>92</sup> Sears, 23.

either in an obituary or on a tombstone, but leave out any mention of having been officers in a regiment of black men.<sup>93</sup>

By now, it should be evident that there was very little sympathy among the officers of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana for the men they commanded. They would not hear of treating their men better, and brutally put down any attempts to bargain for improved conditions. Some, though not all officers, gave poor examples of discipline and conduct for men still acclimating to military life. Others, like Edwin Chamberlain, showed little faith in the abilities of their men. Chamberlain's departure from the field was described and pitied by Cyrus Sears as cowardice, but was more likely rooted in his lack of belief in black men as fighting material.<sup>94</sup> The post-war writings of others demonstrated a lack of concern or real care for their men outside of the army.

### **Demographics of the Enlisted Men of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana**

Yet the men who enlisted in the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry had traveled a road much harder than anything experienced by their white officers. The first clue to exactly how hard that road was lay in the locations from which they were recruited, and their places of origin. The majority of the men had descriptions written at the time of their enlistment, which noted their height and appearance, as well as their occupation, and more crucially, their birthplace. Out of 707 men, all but fifty furnished a birthplace. Fifty-eight percent of them claimed to have been born in Mississippi, and a further nine percent in Louisiana, a total of sixty-seven percent. This meant that over thirty percent of those men had come

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<sup>93</sup> Compiled Service Records of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry, African Descent; Findagrave.com; *Lincoln County Leader*, November 3, 1911; *Argos Reflector*, August 7, 1919. Pickerl and Pintler both appear in obituaries. J.W. Stanfield's Findagrave memorial page mentions his service in its biography, but there is nothing on the tombstone itself to indicate service in the United States Colored Troops.

<sup>94</sup> Sears, 16-17.



from other States. One claimed to have been born in Cuba, while others came from Kentucky, the Carolinas, Tennessee, Virginia, Maryland, Alabama, and Georgia. This means that approximately one-third of the men present in the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry at Milliken's Bend had been sold into slavery in Louisiana. In all probability, they had heard of Milliken's Bend before they ever saw it. Historian Walter Johnson, in his book *Soul By Soul*, traces the route followed by some independent slave traders. The journey took in Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi. The one stop mentioned in Louisiana was Milliken's Bend.<sup>95</sup>

It is therefore possible that a number of the men who fought there had come through that very place on their way to slave markets in Louisiana and Mississippi. That third which had come from states farther north experienced first-hand something dreaded by most slaves; being "sold south." Historian Edward E. Baptist tells the story of Charles Ball, a slave who lived in Maryland in 1805. Ball was accustomed to having a measure of personal freedom, and was even hired out by his master to work in places like the Washington Navy Yard. Then in the spring of 1805, Ball was abruptly sold to a Georgia slave trader, who in turn, sold him to Wade Hampton of South Carolina. Accustomed to lighter labor in Maryland, Ball was struck by the difference in the slaves that met his gaze on his first morning. Half and in some cases, fully naked, the people were so emaciated that their bones could be seen. An overseer watched the slaves closely so that all slaves worked at the same pace, including Ball. At the end of the day, Ball made a crucial error. He began to speak with another slave, a young woman named Lydia, who carried her

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<sup>95</sup> Compiled Service Records of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry, African Descent; Walter Johnson, *Soul By Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market*, Kindle Edition (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), location 646.

baby with her in a sling. Engrossed in their conversation, the two fell behind the others, and were tardy in returning to the slave cabins. For this infraction, the overseer bared Lydia's back and buttocks and beat her bloody with a ten-foot leather whip, while she "screamed and writhed." It was an image which Samuel Ball carried the rest of his life.<sup>96</sup>

While this brutal scene is removed from the battle of Milliken's Bend by some half a century, the example is still relevant. These were the very differences that the men not born in Mississippi and Louisiana would have experienced. This was why they feared being "sold south," according to Historian Walter Johnson in his book *Soul by Soul*. Johnson wrote of Reverend Josiah Henson, the supposed inspiration for the character of Uncle Tom in Harriet Beecher Stowe's famous novel, that, "the fear of being sold south...filled the slaves of the upper south with 'perpetual dread.'"<sup>97</sup> In this threat is the implication of a true horror; one that was faced by many of the men who fought with the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana at Milliken's Bend. The vast majority of these men identified their profession as some kind of manual labor. 191 men said they were farmers, 175 field hands, and 165 laborers, accounting for 531 of the 707 men present that day. Apart from the fifty men for whom a description was not given, the remainder were surprisingly diverse in their professions. Five gave their response to the inquiry rather bluntly as either "slave" or "servant." Robert Carter of Company H, a native of Maryland, stated that he was an M.D. Sergeant Henry Carter of Company D, and Private Charles Gordon of Company B both said that they were engineers. Nelson Jones of Company B may well have been a freedman. He gave his occupation as a shoemaker, and his birthplace as With

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<sup>96</sup> Edward E. Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism* (New York: Basic Books, 2014), 16-17, 111-20; Johnson, location 309.

<sup>97</sup> Johnson, location 309.

County, Virginia. Jones first appears on the 1850 Federal Census in With County with the family of Ashford Wheadon, himself a shoemaker. Ten years later, he appears, still in With County, in the household of James Luciford, also a shoemaker. This time, Jones himself is listed as a shoemaker with a personal estate of \$700. How he came to be in Mississippi three years later is unknown.<sup>98</sup>

Eight men claimed to be waiters, while six were wagoners, and Pleasant Boner of Company B was a tobacconist from Virginia. Nine others listed themselves as carpenters, and Archer Bohard of Company B listed himself as a joiner. Morgan Lewis of Company I was a baker, Monroe and Abner Mayfield of Company I were barbers, and Elias Odum of Company E was a blacksmith. Robert Fisher and John Shaw were house servants, and Calvin Freeman of Rockford County, North Carolina was a painter. Almost all of those who listed a profession other than labor, or field work had come from some place other than Mississippi or Louisiana. The majority of these men, then, had been “sold south,” where a very different life awaited them. Forty-seven of these men were later discharged for various reasons. This does not seem like many out of more than seven-hundred men, but it must be taken into account that – including officers – only 312 men survived their terms of service. Of this number, forty-seven received discharges for disability, a total of fifteen percent of the survivors. Eight of these were listed as being disabled through “old age,” though their estimated ages ranged from twenty-three to forty-four. Six of these men had notes on their discharge certificates that they should never have been enlisted. A total of eleven men out of the forty-seven had that same note. Of those who had been

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<sup>98</sup> Compiled Service Records of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry, African Descent; Seventh Census of the United States, 1850, Bureau of the Census, Record Group 29, National Archives (M432\_957) [Ancestry.com]; 1860 Federal Census.

discharged for old age, not one had come from Mississippi or Louisiana. Six came from Virginia, one from Maryland, and one from North Carolina. The hard labor to which they had been assigned had broken and prematurely aged their bodies. Others who had previous injuries had been enlisted in spite of them. Such circumstances are hardly surprising if the men who determined their physical fitness displayed the same level of care as Sylvester Lanning. Corporal Washington Fairfax was discharged in 1864 because his rheumatism was so severe that he had never been able to hold a gun. Adam Seabrook had dislocated his ankle as a child, and still suffered from the injury as an adult. Private Lewis Hall of Company I was enlisted despite a back injury from having been run over by a loaded wagon. Private George Washington of Company H had also been run over a wagon prior to entering the service, and the bones of his leg were necrotizing from the injury. Ten men in total had been discharged at least in part for rheumatism.<sup>99</sup>

These men had been cared for very little by the people who had owned them, and shockingly little attention had been paid to their conditions upon entering the service. Twenty-four men had been killed on the field at Milliken's Bend, and a further thirty-three had died of wounds received in action there. Of the 707 men who had been present at Milliken's Bend, 303 died before their terms of service expired. 198 of these died in 1863 alone, 153 of whom died at Milliken's Bend between June and September. Thus, by the end of their first six months in service, the veterans of Milliken's Bend had dwindled from over seven-hundred to slightly more than five-hundred. The reason for such losses was not Confederate bullets, bayonets, or artillery. Rather, disease was the scythe that cut its deadly swath through the ranks of the 11<sup>th</sup>. Several strains of typhus swept the camp.

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<sup>99</sup> Compiled Service Records of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry, African Descent.

Private Larkin Bibee of Company F died of madness. The childhood disease of measles claimed no less than eighteen men. Another seven died of pneumonia, and Private George Barny of Company D – presumably left on guard duty for too long – died of sunstroke.<sup>100</sup>

According to historian Jim Downs, this was not an uncommon occurrence. In his book *Sick from Freedom*, Downs writes:

The folk remedies that enslaved people had developed during the antebellum period for minor aches and pains, noncontagious illnesses, and childbirth proved inadequate to combat the onslaught of contagious illness and epidemic outbreaks. Furthermore, plantation healing depended upon the vegetables and herbs that healers cultivated in their gardens and knowledge of the surrounding area, which were lost when they were displaced from familiar surroundings.<sup>101</sup>

Downs goes on to reveal that for all the benefits of emancipation, the breakup of families in their flights to freedom meant that they no longer had access to the family healers that they had relied on under slavery. The heavy reliance on such folk healing, and perhaps even distrust of the medical profession is obvious in the case of Private Henry Stafford of Company D. Wounded at Milliken's Bend, he was reported as a deserter from the post hospital on June 23. Yet he was borne on the regimental rolls for July and August. Private Stafford, rather than deserting, had instead absented himself to the care of friends until his wounds healed. When he felt strong enough, he returned to camp, and presented himself for duty. Stafford later died of pneumonia at Vicksburg in 1865.<sup>102</sup> In essence, there had been little exposure on the part of the former slaves to the strains of disease

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<sup>100</sup> Compiled Service Records of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry, African Descent.

<sup>101</sup> Jim Downs, *Sick from Freedom: African-American Illness and Suffering During the Civil War and Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 24.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid; Compiled Service Records of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry, African Descent.

which now surrounded them. They were therefore unprepared for the new illnesses that they would face, and many of them would succumb to an unseen enemy.

When the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana moved to Transylvania Landing sometime in August, the death toll did not cease, but it did decline sharply. Twenty-one men died at Transylvania Landing in September and August, 1863. Privates William Wright and Anthony Thompson, as well as Corporal Charles Brown, all appear to have died of heart failure. Other causes of death at Transylvania Landing included diarrhea, measles, fever, and pneumonia. Private Soll or Samuel White was listed as having died of fever, but further documentation in his service record alternately lists typhoid fever and pneumonia. While stationed at Transylvania Landing, Corporal Watt Brookins of Company C was accidentally shot in the left thigh, causing a wound that severed his femoral artery. Despite having the limb amputated at the hip, Brookins died four hours later. A mere five deaths occurred in October of that year, and only Sergeant Nicholas Shidmore and Private Archer Fults died in November. A further four died in December, bringing the death toll for 1863 to 198. Out of 707 veterans of Milliken's Bend, by the end of December, 1863, there remained 510. Disease appears to have been the largest killer, as only fifty seven men had died in combat, or on account of wounds received in action.<sup>103</sup>

In 1864, death would take a lesser toll, as a total of seventy-seven men were lost. Five of these were killed in action at Waterproof, Louisiana, in February. Nathan Johnson of Company G had been killed by accident at Waterproof several days before. Two, as related earlier in this chapter, were executed on charges of mutiny. Solomon Cook of Company F died of heart disease, Samuel Robinson of lung disease, and Corporal Joseph

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<sup>103</sup> Compiled Service Records of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry.

Smead of Company D died from inflammation of the liver. Nine died of unstated diseases, two of consumption, and others from diarrhea, dysentery, erysipelas, variola, smallpox, and various forms of typhus.<sup>104</sup> As can be seen from these details, disease continued to be the primary killer for the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana. Nor would the deaths cease going into the next year. 1865 started off with fresh violence, as Private King George of Company H received fatal injuries from “resisting arrest.” Exactly what the unfortunate Private had done in order to merit arrest is not stated. Private Thomas Wilson of Company H had survived the battle of Milliken’s Bend and the outbreaks of disease around him, but drowned while bathing in the Mississippi River on August 27. Just over a week before Wilson’s death, Privates Churchwell Green and Henry Welsh of Company D had been murdered by guerillas near Burtin, Mississippi. The remaining nineteen deaths that took place in 1865 were all the result of disease, with the possible exception of Private William Wright of Company H. Wright’s service record claims that he died of heart disease. This implies that his death was brought about either by harsh labor conditions or genetic inheritance, rather than a contracted illness. A further six deaths were recorded, though the dates on which they occurred were not. Thus over a period of three years, a total of 304 men of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry died, leaving 403 survivors.<sup>105</sup>

The problem that follows from those whose fates are known is the unknown fate of the prisoners taken at Milliken’s Bend. In all, McCulloch’s Brigade took 113

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<sup>104</sup> Compiled Service Records of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry, African Descent.

<sup>105</sup> Compiled Service Records of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry, African Descent. The deaths of Privates Green and Welsh are not elaborated on further than to say that they were “murdered by guerillas,” and the general vicinity in which it happened. It is to be assumed that it was a racial killing, given that the war had already ended months before.

prisoners from the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana that day. Of these, seven returned after a period of captivity. A further eleven were either reported missing when actually wounded, or died of their wounds. This leaves ninety-six prisoners of war unaccounted for, and with very little way to trace them past captivity. With such a low rate of returned prisoners, it is hard to imagine that many survived the experience. Private Nelson Lott of Company A appears to have been the first to return, as his name was listed on the muster roll for July and August, 1863. Private George Elzy reappeared on September 3, followed by Sergeant Levi Level on September 30. Padon Turner of Company B returned to his regiment on April 27, 1864, and was soon after promoted to Sergeant. Private Adam Wilson of Company A returned on October 3, 1864. Finally, two Privates from Company A returned in late 1865. Nelson Washington reappeared on November 22, and George Washington on December 11. The latter claimed to have been held in Texas as a prisoner of war up until that point.<sup>106</sup>

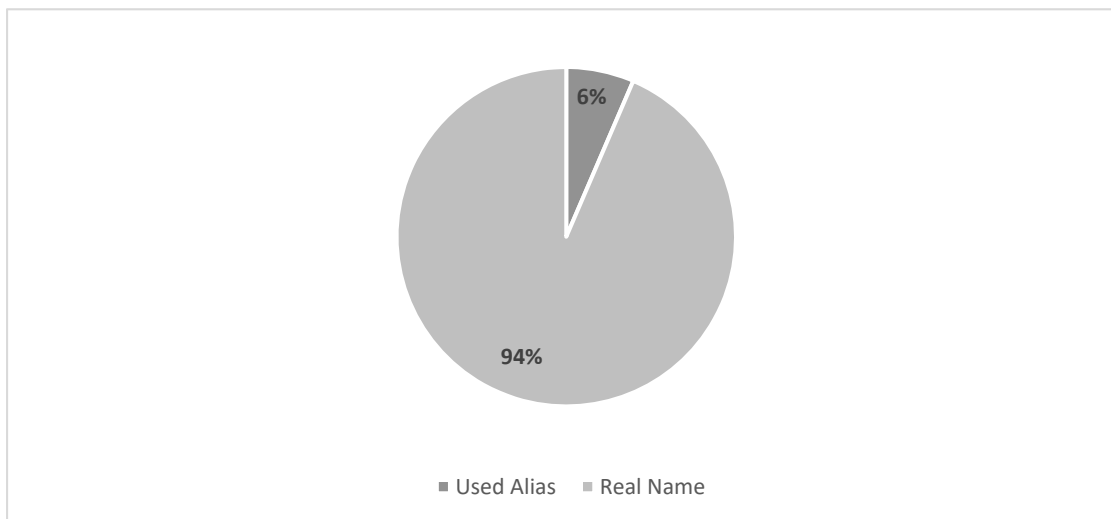
These deaths and absences leave slightly more than three-hundred surviving veterans of Milliken's Bend, yet whittling the survivors down is not quite so simple. Of those veterans not known to have died in service or in captivity, no fewer than twenty-six deserted from the army, and no further trace of them can be found. A further twenty-two were discharged for disability, and two more dishonorably discharged. A few of those discharged for disability can be found in the late 1860s and early 1870s through the papers of the Freedman's Bank. Beyond that, there is no trace of these men other than the end of their service records. Another forty-five men, who fulfilled their terms of service, simply cannot be located. This means that of approximately seven-hundred men present

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<sup>106</sup> Compiled Service Records of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry, African Descent.



at Milliken's Bend on June 7, 1863, roughly two-hundred survivors can be traced with any level of certainty. One possible explanation for the lack of evidence,



*Figure 3.1.* The usage of aliases among the surviving veterans of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry.

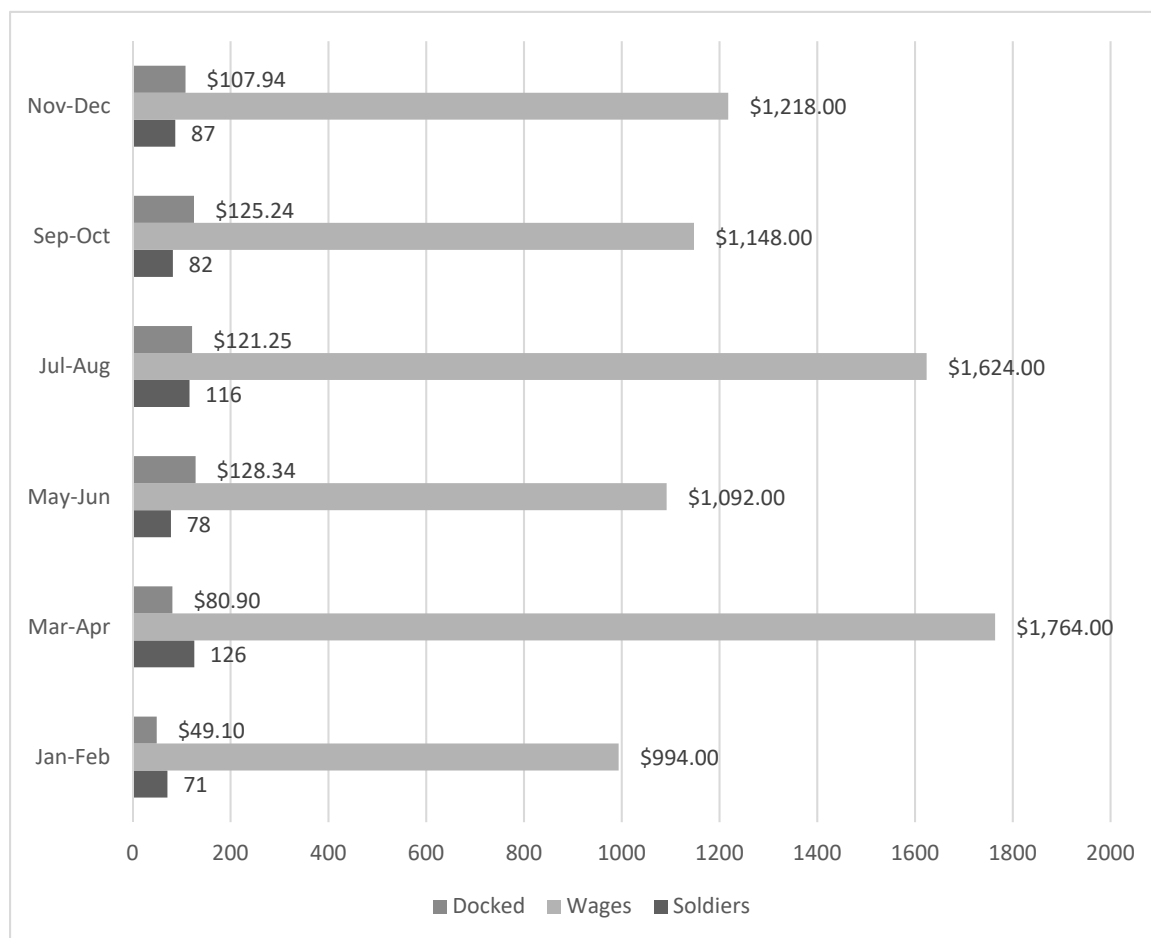
especially for those who deserted, lies in their pension applications. Just over five percent of the known survivors enlisted using an alias (see figure 3.1).<sup>107</sup> While a small overall percentage, it does hint that the actual number of men enlisting under assumed names may have been larger. Without testimony on the part of the veterans themselves, this is difficult to prove. For those who deserted, such testimony is unlikely to have been forthcoming.

For those who remained, newfound rewards such as earning wages also had unexpected drawbacks. Taking the year 1865 as an example, which was the regiment's second full year of service, the service records show a large amount of pay withheld for infractions. For some, it was because of transportation provided. For others, it was

<sup>107</sup> Compiled Service Records of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry, African Descent; National Archives and Records Administration, *Organization Index to Pension Files of Veterans Who Served Between 1861 and 1900*. Record Group 15, Publication Number T289 [Fold3]; Ancestry.com, *U.S., Freedman's Bank Records, 1865-1871* (Provo: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2005).

damage to or loss of equipment, but for all twelve months of 1865, there were never fewer than seventy men who were penalized by having a portion of their pay withheld.

Figure 3.2 below gives a breakdown of the muster periods,



*Figure 3.2.* The number of men docked per month in 1865, their total wages, and the amounts withheld.

showing the amount of men docked, the amount of pay that should have been collectively earned, and the total held back. This figure is based on the wage of seven dollars per month.<sup>108</sup>

<sup>108</sup> Compiled Service Records of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry, African Descent; Redkey, 230-31.

On the surface, these penalties do not seem to have much of an impact, and indeed, many of these dockings were small, some amounting to no more than three cents. Others, however, were as much as nineteen dollars for the loss of a rifle. For a man earning seven dollars a month, this would consume the majority of three months' pay. Small wonder a trooper in the 6<sup>th</sup> USCI wrote,

...we are to get but \$7.00 per month. Really I thought I was a soldier, and it made me feel somewhat proud to think that I had a right to fight for Uncle Sam. When I was at Chelton Hill I felt very patriotic; but my wife's letters have brought my patriotism down to the freezing point, and I don't think it will ever rise again; and it is the case all through the regiment. Men having families at home, and looking to them for support, and they not being able to send them one penny.<sup>109</sup>

Such words bring into sharper focus Sergeant Giles Sims of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana, who was executed for mutiny. In a heartbreaking end to Sims' service record, it is noted that, after his execution, his worldly possessions amounted to one cap and two stable frocks. These meager items were collected by his widow, Hetty.<sup>110</sup> Even had she been inclined to sell them, it is doubtful that she would have earned enough for a meal, let alone a livelihood. Well might other men in the regiment wonder, with so little pay or recognition for the blood they had shed, what was it for which they were serving, suffering, and dying?

By the time the veterans of Milliken's Bend in the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana were mustered out on March 22, 1866, it had become evident that black men in Union blue had overstayed their welcome. Additionally, the soldiers themselves were aching to stretch their limbs free of both slave chains and army regulations. Historian Donald R. Shaffer maintains that soldiers were often concerned about the families they had left behind to

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<sup>109</sup> Compiled Service Records of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry, African Descent; Redkey, 237.

<sup>110</sup> Compiled Service Records of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry, African Descent.

enter the army, sometimes in haste, and without making adequate provision for them.<sup>111</sup>

The 215 men who remained after the war's end followed a specific set of patterns. Most remained in the area from which they had served. Thirty men remained in Louisiana, while a staggering 110 remained in Mississippi. Sixteen moved to Arkansas, and another fourteen to Kansas. Among those who lived out their days in Kansas was the disgraced Doctor Sylvester Lanning, who became quite involved in local politics. Another four officers also moved to Kansas, meaning that only nine enlisted men had made their homes there. On November 18, 1894, thirty-one years after Milliken's Bend, Lieutenant Eli Griffith of Company H, had moved into a soldier's home in Leavenworth, Kansas. The following day, suffering from rheumatism and lung disease, the aged former officer self-medicated with morphine, and fatally misjudged the dosage; an incident eerily similar to the death of the 16<sup>th</sup>'s Captain W.T.G. Weaver. A handful returned to the areas where they had been born, including Maryland and Virginia. Captain James Kelly moved to Texas, as did Private Wesley Massison, who wound up in El Paso, Texas. Massison was likely unaware that former Lieutenant Dudley Waddill of the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas, whose wound at Milliken's Bend had forced his resignation, had also ended his days in El Paso. Waddill had for years been a successful grocer, whereas the city directories indicate that Massison made his living as a porter, and later, as a janitor. Aside from areas like Kansas, the enlisted men and officers took very different paths. The enlisted men tended to remain in the South, or in the lower Midwest, whereas officers tended to be found in the

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<sup>111</sup> Compiled Service Records of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry, African Descent; Donald R. Shaffer, *After the Glory: The Struggles of Black Civil War Veterans* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 23-31.

North, and upper Midwest. Two areas with lower overall numbers, but higher mixed quantities were Kansas and Illinois.<sup>112</sup>

Such findings seem contradictory to normal patterns within the United States Colored Troops. According to Shaffer, the 1890 Federal Veterans Schedule indicated that a large proportion of black veterans were living in the North. Yet, as the preceding information has shown, well over half of the surviving veterans of Milliken's Bend remained entrenched in the South, particularly in Mississippi and Louisiana. Very few enlisted men moved any further north than Illinois. Of those few who had moved to Kansas, there was a greater tendency to join the ranks of the Grand Army of the Republic.<sup>113</sup> This may be one of the reasons that the memory of Milliken's Bend remains so elusive. The men did not follow the historical norms, and so sources that would normally have recorded their experiences were simply not there. The men of the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Cavalry had also remained largely in a single area, staying in or near Texas, the state from which they had served. Some 320 men are recorded to have died in Texas, a number approaching half of the men who were at Milliken's Bend.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> *El Paso Herald*, May 2, 1904; Ancestry.com. *U.S. City Directories, 1822-1995* (Provo: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011); *Handbook of Texas Online*, Brett J. Derbes, "Weaver, William Thomas Green," accessed March 08, 2018; 1870 Federal Census; 1880 Federal Census; National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. Special Schedules of the Eleventh Census (1890) Enumerating Union Veterans and Widows of Union Veterans of the Civil War; Series Number: M123, hereafter cited as the 1890 Federal Veterans Schedule unless otherwise noted; 1900 Federal Census; Ancestry.com, *U.S. National Homes for Disabled Soldiers* (Provo: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2007); National Archives and Records Administration, *Organizational Index to Pension Files of Veterans Who Served Between 1861 and 1900*. Record Group 15, Publication Number T289 [Fold3]; Ancestry.com, *Kansas, Enrollment of Civil War Veterans, 1889* (Provo: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2013); *The Kingman Leader Courier*, September 22, 1887; *The Kingman Daily Courier*, October 3, 1887; National Cemetery Administration, *U.S. Veterans' Gravesites, ca. 1775-2006* (Provo: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2006). On the research process for finding these veterans, the pension index was invaluable. Compared with finding the enlisted men, for whom records were scarce, finding the white officers was simple to the point of absurdity.

<sup>113</sup> Shaffer, 46-47; Ancestry.com, *Kansas, Enrollment of Civil War Veterans, 1889* (Provo: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2013).

<sup>114</sup> 1870 Federal Census; 1880 Federal Census; 1900 Federal Census; 1910 Federal Census; 1920 Federal Census; 1930 Federal Census; Findagrave.com; Texas Death Index; Texas Death Certificates; Ray, 4-24.

Few spoke of Milliken's Bend at length, aside from the officers, and fewer of them spoke about it at all. David Cornwell of the 9<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry and Colonel Cyrus Sears, who led the 11<sup>th</sup> on the day it first stood fire are among the only ones to have put their memories to paper. Sergeant Levi Level, who was captured on the picket line, left a brief memory when applying for his pension, since he had to describe how he had obtained the injury which required him to seek Government aid. Yet even here, he was to be disappointed. Because he had not been treated by a United States Army physician, and had neither a statement from such an officer nor a comrade to state how his injury was received, his pension claim was denied. By the sheer number of men and their spouses and children who applied for pensions, or took advantage of homes for disabled soldiers, were buried in National Cemeteries, or simply acknowledged their service on the 1890 Veterans Schedule, it is clear that they were proud of their service.<sup>115</sup> There is little to suggest, though, that they were proud of Milliken's Bend.

In that small area of ground, they had lost scores of men to violence and disease before they had been in service for a single year. Men like Giles Sims, who had been wounded there, and proved his mettle, were later executed for simply wanting to be treated better. Battles like Fort Wagner had outshone their performance in the public imagination. Shaffer perhaps words it best when he writes, "freedom for the slaves was the central outcome of the war, and they considered themselves the manly liberators of their people. Not surprisingly, then, black soldiers were proud of their military service

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<sup>115</sup> National Archives and Records Administration, *Indexes to Pensions Including Civil War and Later Service*, Publication Number T288, Roll 281, Pension File 632957, Levi Level; Compiled Service Records of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry, African Descent; 1890 Federal Veterans Schedule; Ancestry.com, *U.S. National Homes for Disabled Soldiers* (Provo: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2007); National Archives and Records Administration, *Organizational Index to Pension Files of Veterans Who Served Between 1861 and 1900*. Record Group 15, Publication Number T289 [Fold3]; National Cemetery Administration, *U.S. Veterans' Gravesites, ca. 1775-2006* (Provo: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2006).

and wanted it to be remembered.” Yet within the same paragraph, he acknowledges that black veterans had to fight to ensure that their service was remembered, and not marginalized or diminished. Milliken’s Bend appears in the records of the veterans of the 11<sup>th</sup> only where it must. Levi Level mentioned the battle on his pension application because it was where his injury occurred. John Howard of Company B listed his injuries when entering a soldiers’ home in Ohio, but did not list where they occurred. Only his name on the rolls of the wounded at Milliken’s Bend identifies the place of his injury.<sup>116</sup>

It is also telling that David Cornwell of the 9<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry, a veteran of the awful carnage at Shiloh, was wakened by a vision of Milliken’s Bend. If a hardened veteran should have such awful nightmares and memories, how much more horrific must that place have been for men standing fire for the first time?<sup>117</sup> It would be little wonder if many of the survivors had chosen to let the battle fade into obscurity. Then there is the issue of the lifespans of the veterans. Of twenty-seven officers present at Milliken’s Bend on the day of the battle, sixteen saw the dawn of the twentieth century. The last of them, Lieutenant John Koehler, died in 1926.<sup>118</sup> Of 187 enlisted men, it is difficult to determine exact death years, as records are largely incomplete. However, by making estimates of death using the year of the record on which they last appeared, some ninety-two men appear to have passed prior to 1900 (see figure 3.4). Private Napoleon Hawkins of Company D appears to have died around this time. The 1900 Federal Census, the last

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<sup>116</sup> Shaffer, 169; Compiled Service Records of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry, African Descent; <sup>116</sup>National Archives and Records Administration, *Indexes to Pensions Including Civil War and Later Service*, Publication Number T288, Roll 281, Pension File 632957, Levi Level; Ancestry.com, *U.S. National Homes for Disabled Soldiers* (Provo: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2007).

<sup>117</sup> Wearmouth, 115-21, 238.

<sup>118</sup> Compiled Service Records of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry, African Descent; Findagrave.com; Ancestry.com, *U.S. National Homes for Disabled Soldiers* (Provo: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2007); National Cemetery Administration, *U.S. Veterans’ Gravesites, ca. 1775-2006* (Provo: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2006); 1890 Federal Veterans Schedules; 1910 Federal Census; 1920 Federal Census.

record in which the unfortunate private appears, shows him as an inmate of the Mississippi State Asylum. This leaves almost half of the total number of survivors in the twentieth century. By 1930, there were three surviving veterans of Milliken's Bend from the ranks of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana; Privates Stewart Huston of Company K, James Taylor of Company I, and Ross Washington of Company H. Huston and Taylor both died in 1930; Huston in a National Home in Kansas, and Taylor in Canton, Mississippi. This left Ross Washington the last remaining veteran of the 11<sup>th</sup> who had fought at Milliken's Bend. Washington passed on November 1, 1931 in Edwards, Mississippi.<sup>119</sup>

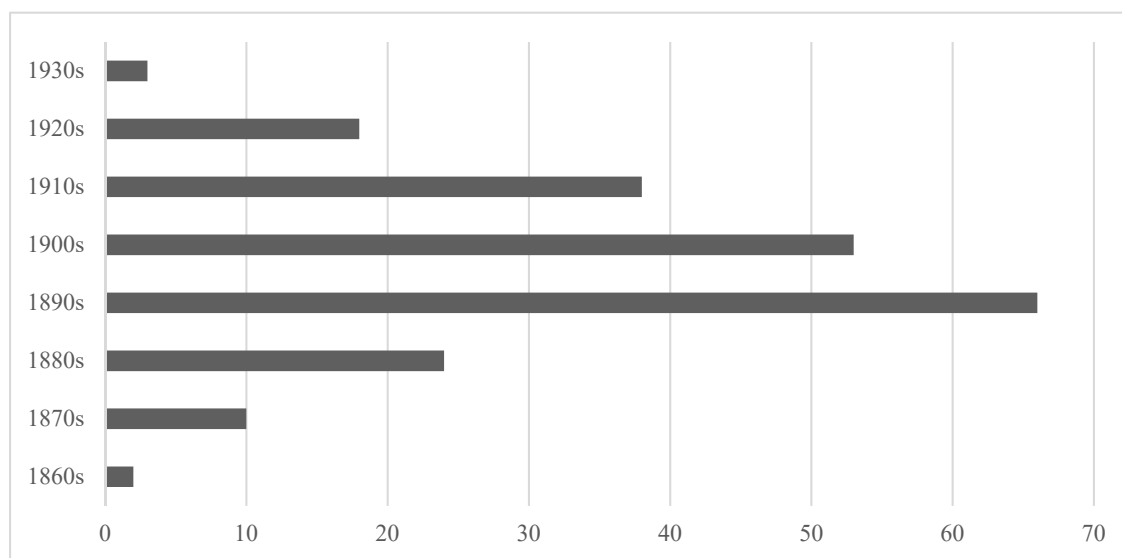
There are no accounts that tell of how the enlisted men felt, whether they were enraged or terrified that day, or how they perceived the battle's significance. In this narrative of the veterans of the 11<sup>th</sup>, this is the one single fact that stands out. There are documents from the service records of the officers, and newspaper articles that mention them later in life. There is even a speech by Colonel Cyrus Sears given on the battle of

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<sup>119</sup> National Archives and Records Administration, *Organizational Index to Pension Files of Veterans Who Served Between 1861 and 1900*. Record Group 15, Publication Number T289 [Fold3]; <sup>119</sup>Compiled Service Records of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry, African Descent; Findagrave.com; Ancestry.com, *U.S. National Homes for Disabled Soldiers* (Provo: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2007); National Cemetery Administration, *U.S. Veterans' Gravesites, ca. 1775-2006* (Provo: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2006); 1890 Federal Veterans Schedules; 1910 Federal Census; 1920 Federal Census.



Milliken's Bend. The sole statement from one of the enlisted men comes from the



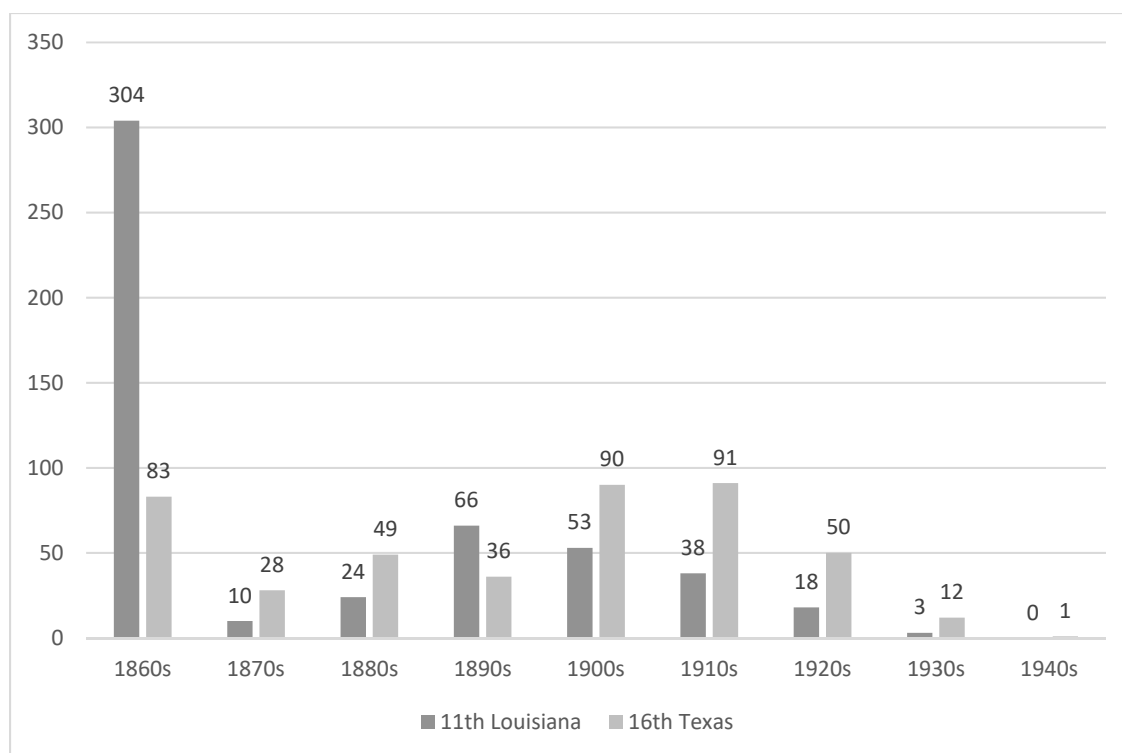
*Figure 3.3.* A breakdown of the deaths of the men of the 11th Louisiana by decade. These figures are based on the last known record in which the soldiers appeared, and do not necessarily reflect a certain year of death.<sup>120</sup>

pension application of Levi Level. It may very well be that there are more such items hidden away within the National Archives, and that possibility certainly warrants further investigation. For the moment, however, the overwhelming majority of the firsthand Union accounts of the battle come from white men in positions of authority. What remains is a single account from a man who never took part in the carnage on the levee. In that way, his – admittedly limited – account parallels that of Joseph Blessington. This means that not a single account has yet been discovered from one of the inexperienced

<sup>120</sup> National Archives and Records Administration, *Organizational Index to Pension Files of Veterans Who Served Between 1861 and 1900*. Record Group 15, Publication Number T289 [Fold3]; <sup>120</sup>Compiled Service Records of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry, African Descent; Findagrave.com; Ancestry.com, *U.S. National Homes for Disabled Soldiers* (Provo: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2007); National Cemetery Administration, *U.S. Veterans' Gravesites, ca. 1775-2006* (Provo: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2006); The National Archives at Washington, D.C.; Washington, D.C.; Special Schedules of the Eleventh Census (1890) Enumerating Union Veterans and Widows of Union Veterans of the Civil War; Series Number: M123, hereafter cited as 1890 Federal Veterans Schedules unless otherwise noted; 1910 Federal Census; 1920 Federal Census; Ancestry.com, *U.S. Freedman's Bank Records, 1865-1871* (Provo: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2005).

black soldiers who held their ground on the levee. The accounts of the battle from the Confederate perspective are many, but the memory of the battle from a black perspective is all but nonexistent.

Figure 3.4 below shows the difference in death rates between the men of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana, and that of the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Cavalry. What is immediately apparent is the large difference in deaths in the decade of the war. This includes the men who were killed at Milliken's Bend. The discrepancy between these numbers is enormous. Not for another three decades would the men of the 11<sup>th</sup> die in greater numbers than the men of the 16<sup>th</sup>. Yet, the memory of Milliken's Bend in the men of the 11<sup>th</sup> had lasted almost as long as that of the men of the 16<sup>th</sup>, even if they were far less numerous. Apart from whatever memories they might have shared in their pension applications, it does not appear that any of the enlisted men of the 11<sup>th</sup> cared to deliberately leave behind a memory of the battle. The men of the 16<sup>th</sup>, as seen in Chapter II, left behind numerous accounts.



*Figure 3.4.* A comparison of deaths by decade of the men of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry and the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Cavalry.

There were black men who wrote about Milliken's Bend within the lifetime of its veterans, and certainly within the century in which it took place. African-American writer, and former escaped slave William Wells Brown penned the volume, *The Negro in the American Rebellion*, in which he devoted a chapter to the battle. Brown certainly drew on the sources available to him at the time, but also seemingly allowed his emotions to influence his writing. One of his sources claimed that the black troops had been taken prisoner and executed on the spot. This claim is not supported by Cornwell, but seems to have been sufficient for Brown to state that "no negro was ever found alive that was taken a prisoner by the rebels in this fight." While the point of view of Milliken's Bend as a massacre will be examined later, the accounts of Levi Level and Private George Washington of Company A disprove this claim instantly. It is understandable, though,

with the later massacres visited on black troops in the Civil War, that Brown would have come to such a conclusion. George W. Williams, a contemporary of Browns, and himself a black veteran and Judge Advocate of the Grand Army of the Republic, also made such claims about Milliken's Bend. Rather than calling the battle a massacre, however, Williams merely stated that the fates of the officers and enlisted men remained unknown, but that "no word was ever had, and it is fair to presume they were murdered." Williams' position in the Grand Army of the Republic would have made it possible for him to inquire more fully into the facts of the matter, but it does not appear that he did so before publishing his work. It is clear that he rightfully admired the bravery of his fellow soldiers on the levee, writing, "although recently from the house of bondage, they knew the value of liberty, and those who fell...did not grudge the price they paid in yielding up their lives."<sup>121</sup>

On this point, Williams appears to be correct. The service records of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana show no evidence that any of the men ever complained about their combat duties, or about risking their lives. In fact, Private Peter Dodson, who contracted and died of smallpox while on hospital duty in 1864, was highly complimented in his service record. The officer filling out Dodson's papers wrote that he was "an excellent soldier who always did his duty cheerfully." On the opposite end of the scale there was Private Lewis Coffee of Company D, who was noted in 1864 as being "of no account as a soldier," while on leave awaiting discharge. However, the service record also indicates

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<sup>121</sup> William Wells Brown, *The Negro in the American Rebellion: His Heroism and His Fidelity* (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1867), 137-41; George W. Williams, *A History of the Negro Troops in the War of the Rebellion* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1888), 224-28; Compiled Service Records of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry, African Descent; Martha Hodes, *Mourning Lincoln* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 263. For Williams' service and rank, see the publishing information sheet in his volume.

that Private Coffee died of diarrhea while on recruiting duty. This brings the account of the service record into question. If Coffee had truly been “of no account,” why was he trusted to help bring in fresh recruits?<sup>122</sup> The men of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana then, had arguably experienced a greater struggle against the prejudice and ill-treatment from their own officers from 1863 to 1866, than they had at Milliken’s Bend or Waterproof. It would be small wonder, in that case, if the men had indeed been prouder of their service itself than they had of the two battles in which they had taken part. Their service at the battle of Milliken’s Bend had proven they could fight. Their continued service under officers who doubted their worth proved they were men.

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<sup>122</sup> Compiled Service Records of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry, African Descent.

#### CHAPTER IV: THE BATTLE OF MILLIKEN'S BEND

Determined not only to attempt relief of the Confederate garrison at Vicksburg, but to curb Federal movements in Confederate-held territory, General Edmund Kirby-Smith, the newly-appointed Commander of the Trans-Mississippi Department ordered Walker's Texas Division south from Pine Bluff, Arkansas, to Monroe, Louisiana on April 14<sup>th</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup>, 1863. Finally informed of their intended strike on April 23, the Division moved out before dawn the next day. The day before Walker's Division formally received their orders, Union authorities had begun appointing officers to take command of new regiments that were to be composed of black troops. Over the course of the next month, large numbers of black men, mostly recently-freed slaves, were recruited to fill the ranks of these regiments. The great majority were recruited in Mississippi, coming from Grand Gulf and from Jackson. Others enlisted at Milliken's Bend, Louisiana. What should be immediately obvious from this is the vast difference in experience levels between the two sets of future combatants. The 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry brought in its first recruits on May 8, less than a month before the Battle of Milliken's Bend. These raw recruits, few, if any of whom had ever had the opportunity to handle a weapon before, would have only four weeks to drill, train, and become marksmen. The first recruit for the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry, African Descent, one Stephen Bronson, was recruited on May 2, followed by a large number of recruits on May 8. The recruiting would continue every few days up until June 5. In effect, by the time the battle of Milliken's Bend took place, the most experienced recruits had only a month's training, whereas the least experienced had signed up only two days before.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Lowe, 71-73; Compiled military service records of volunteer Union soldiers who served with the U.S. Colored Troops (USCT): Infantry Organizations, 47th through 55th. National Archives and Records

The men of McCulloch's Brigade had enlisted mostly in the Spring of 1862. Though only the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Cavalry, also known as Fitzhugh's Regiment, had seen combat as a unit, all four regiments had the luxury of a year's drill and training. More than this, their Division Commander, John G. Walker, had a well-deserved reputation as a drill-master. While Walker, a veteran of Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia, had only taken command the previous December, by the time his men fought at Milliken's Bend, they had been under his direction and training methods for most of six months.<sup>124</sup> This meant that the scale of experience tipped heavily in favor of the Texas troops in the coming battle, and their skill in arms should have easily overmatched their opponents. For this reason alone, it is nothing short of incredible that the men of the African Brigade were able to fend off their attackers for so long.

If Walker's men had been able to travel directly to Milliken's Bend, then the intended Confederate objective in fighting the battle might have been achieved. Instead, according to Lowe, the journey to the battlefield took six weeks, and in that time they had "marched 350 miles and steamed up and down four rivers and a lake for another 510 miles – all to reach the Vicinity of Vicksburg, only 150 miles from their original starting point."<sup>125</sup> This extended and convoluted period of travel had wasted valuable time, both for Walker's Texas Division and for the Confederate defenders of Vicksburg. For the former, it meant that they had lost the battle long before they ever saw the battlefield. This item aside, they might have fared somewhat better at Milliken's Bend if they had

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Administration, Record Group 94, National Archives, Washington, D.C. (Microfilm M2000) – hereafter cited as Compiled Service Records of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry, African Descent, unless otherwise noted.

<sup>124</sup> Stewart Sifakis. 1995. *Compendium of the Confederate Armies: Texas*. New York: Facts in File, Inc., 73, 127-129; Lowe, 61-62.

<sup>125</sup> Lowe, 101.

been able to enjoy the intended element of surprise. In one of the largest Confederate blunders leading up to the battle, upon landing on the east bank of the Tensas River, General Henry McCulloch decided to attack a small and strategically unimportant Federal outpost at Perkin's Landing. Even General Walker, writing a history of the war west of the Mississippi, wrote dismissively of Perkin's Landing. McCulloch's reasoning for attacking the outpost, manned by a single Union regiment, remains a mystery. A letter written by Sergeant John S. Bryan of the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Cavalry may provide one clue. Henry McCulloch was the brother of General Ben McCulloch, killed the year before at the battle of Pea Ridge. Henry McCulloch had not engaged Federal forces since the time of his brother's death. Just before Christmas in 1862, several months after Ben McCulloch's death, Sergeant Bryan wrote his wife that Henry McCulloch wanted to engage the Union Army "on the same ground that [sic] ben McCulloch was killed on."<sup>126</sup>

This would seem to indicate that McCulloch's attack at Perkin's Landing served only to satisfy McCulloch's desire for revenge. After chasing the 60<sup>th</sup> Indiana Infantry and some three hundred escaped slaves away from their camp, the Third Brigade Commander ordered a Confederate battery into the field for an exchange of fire with the Federal gunship *Carondelet*.<sup>127</sup> The only real result of this small encounter was to provide an early warning to their intended targets that Walker's Division had arrived in the vicinity of Vicksburg. Captain John Connelly of the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Cavalry wrote passively of the engagement,

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<sup>126</sup> Lowe, 82-85; John G. Walker. 2013. *Greyhound Commander: Confederate General John G. Walker's History of the Civil War West of the Mississippi*. Edited by Richard Lowe. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 70; J. S. Bryan to Dear Nancy, December 17, 1862. Bryan Papers; Lowe 82-85; *Handbook of Texas Online*, Thomas W. Cutrer, "McCulloch, Benjamin," accessed March 25, 2017, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fmc34>.

<sup>127</sup> Lowe, 82-85.



I shall say nothing of our march from Alexandria to Richmond as nothing of importance occurred on the way except a light duel between Edgar's battery of Light [sic] artillery and a gun boat at [sic] Perkin' Landing on the Mississippi fifteen miles from Vicksburg.<sup>128</sup>

Connelly recalled that Walker's Division reached Richmond on June 6, and "remained there long enough to cook two day's rations." At sundown, he recalled, they had taken up the line of march toward Milliken's Bend, and marched until midnight. Having reached Oak Grove Plantation, they laid down to rest for some four hours. Blessington maintains that the men rested for four hours at Richmond before moving out. John Scott, in his flowery speech, made it plain that there were stars in the sky when he and Lieutenant Hampton lay down to rest. Both Scott's and Connelly's memories were recorded in or after 1900, whereas Blessington's account was written only twelve years after the battle. Having stopped to cook rations at Richmond, it makes sense that their rest was taken there, and that they woke and moved out after dark. This assessment is also borne out by Lowe.<sup>129</sup> The next few hours would be an experience that would try them in ways they had never expected.

The 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana, under the command of Colonel Edwin Chamberlain, had been at Milliken's Bend from formation. The officers, including Chamberlain, had been selected for their new assignments on April 22 by an order from the Secretary of War. By the time the battle of Milliken's Bend began on June 7, 1863, the regiment was still not fully formed. There were six Field and Staff Officers, including Chamberlain, Lieutenant

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<sup>128</sup> John W. Connelly, *Memoirs*, 178. Documents provided by Malinda Allison on behalf of the Fannin County Historical Commission, hereafter as Connelly *Memoirs* unless otherwise noted. Citation given as requested by Malinda Allison. Connelly's memoirs are actually part of a serial from the *Honey Grove Signal*, only two copies of which are still in existence. The writing preserved here is from a scrapbook of newspaper clippings discovered by the Fannin County Historical Commission in 2016.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid*; Blessington, 93-94; *Sherman Daily Register*, October 13, 1900; Lowe, 88.

Colonel Cyrus Sears, Adjutant Thomas Free, Major William Cotton, and Surgeon Sylvester Lanning. Ten companies had been formed, though not all had been sworn in, and only eight men held the rank of Captain. Company K consisted of Lieutenant Peter Wood, and Privates Huston Stewart and Anstin Williams. Both Privates had enlisted on May 25, and both would be transferred to Company G in August. Lieutenant Wood would be elevated to the rank of Captain, but in another company.<sup>130</sup> Adding to the problems facing the regiment in the lead up to the impending battle were the issues of marksmanship and inferior weaponry. Barnickel reports that “the men were armed with Austrian rifles, which, besides firing a large .69 caliber ball, were notoriously unreliable.”<sup>131</sup> David Cornwell, a Lieutenant in the 9<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry, African Descent, was charged with teaching the recruits how to aim and fire their guns. Results were not quickly forthcoming, and an exasperated Cornwell wrote that most shots “would only make a hole through the atmosphere fifty feet above and twenty to the right of the target.” Cornwell noted that the battle of Milliken’s Bend was still a week away, and that the recruits might have shown improvement given more time. What he did not say is that recruits were still coming in, who would have far less training than those he was instructing.<sup>132</sup>

Word had quickly reached the encampment at Milliken’s Bend of the clash at Perkin’s Landing, and on June 6, Colonel Hermann Lieb, commanding that post, sent out a detachment to locate the threat. Encountering a Confederate picket force near

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<sup>130</sup> Compiled Service Records of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry, African Descent.

<sup>131</sup> Barnickel, 79.

<sup>132</sup> John Wearmouth, Ed. *The Cornwell Chronicles: Tales of an American Life on the Erie Canal, Building Chicago, in the Volunteer Civil War Western Army, in a Country Store* (Berwyn Heights: Heritage Books, 2015) 204-05; Compiled Service Records of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry, African Descent.

Richmond, Lieb cautiously withdrew back to Milliken's Bend, where he made a report to his superiors of the incident. Believing an attack imminent, Lieb's superior, General Elias Dennis, ordered the 23<sup>rd</sup> Iowa to Milliken's Bend. The General also requested naval support, which came in the form of the gunboat U.S.S. *Choctaw*. Lieb posted pickets a distance out from the levee where the battle would take place. Among the units posted were Companies B, F, and H of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry. Lieb ensured that the other regiments of the African Brigade would be in place by 2a.m. for the coming battle.<sup>133</sup>

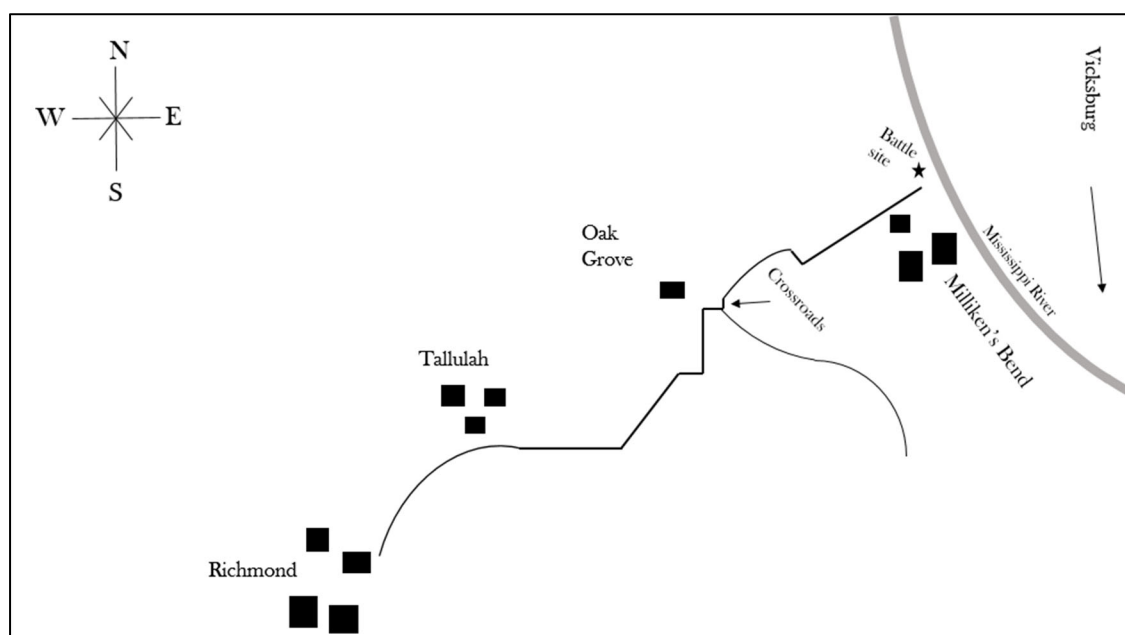


Figure 4.1. Map showing the route of McCulloch's Brigade from Richmond, Louisiana, to Milliken's Bend.

Walker's Division had left Richmond on the evening of June 6 and marched five miles east to a crossroads near Oak Grove Plantation. There, Walker's three Brigades

<sup>133</sup> Barnickel, 86; Compiled Service Records of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry; ; National Archives and Records Administration, *Indexes to Pensions Including Civil War and Later Service*, Publication Number T288, Roll 281, Pension File 632957, Levi Level. The service records of men from Company B indicate that several men were captured "while on picket," at Milliken's Bend, and Levi Level of Company H detailed being captured while falling back. The capture of Lieutenant George Conn of Company F indicates that his Company was present on picket, as will be seen later in this chapter. It also makes sense that the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana would be the only regiment from the Brigade to be on picket, as the remaining regiments were likely too small to allow for a significant detachment for picket duty ahead of an impending battle.

would part ways. Hawes' Brigade turned right for their own planned attack on the Federal outpost at Young's Point. Horace Randall's Brigade remained at the plantation with General Walker, and Henry McCulloch steered his columns to the left for the five mile march to Milliken's Bend. At about 2:30 in the morning, a detachment of Louisiana cavalry, acting as scouts for McCulloch, were fired on by Lieb's pickets, who had remained unseen in the darkness. Wheeling around, they rushed back to McCulloch's lines, only to be fired on again by their own men, anxious for the battle to come. With the scouts having retired, McCulloch sent forward skirmishers to deal with Lieb's pickets. It is likely that this skirmish force was the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Infantry under Colonel George Flournoy. August Schilling, a German-born soldier in Flournoy's regiment, recorded the encounter. "We were going on a forced march and just at the break of day we encountered a large picket force which opened a terrible fire on us. My friend and I were ... side by side and he was killed by the first volley."<sup>134</sup> The 16<sup>th</sup> Infantry would not take part in the coming struggle on the levee, but was held in reserve. Nevertheless, they did take a small number of casualties, totaling only seven men. Since the other regiments had fully engaged the enemy by the time Colonel Flournoy was ordered forward, it is unlikely that the casualties were taken in the main part of the battle. If they were not received on or near the levee, then it must be assumed that they were at least part of the picket force.

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<sup>134</sup> Yeary, 665-66; Lowe, 89, 105-07; Barnickel, 87; Blessington, 95-96. Schilling's account describes having been "riding" next to his friend. It is likely that this was the result of confusion in his later years, as no part of McCulloch's Brigade was mounted that day aside from the scouts. Also, of the two fatalities in Flournoy's Regiment that day, only John B. Bible could have survived the wound long enough to pull a Bible out to give to Schilling, as he described. This act itself would have been dangerous, if not impossible for mounted men retreating from an unseen enemy.

Blessington does not record contact with the enemy at all, apart from shooting across the levee.<sup>135</sup>

As McCulloch's men fired into the picket lines, three bullets struck Private John Howard. One entered his left cheek, another penetrated his left hip, and a third struck his left hand, parting him from two of his fingers. Sergeant James A. Von of Company B was shot through the shoulder, and suffered a broken shoulder blade as the projectile passed through his back. Private Samuel Morris was struck in the right hand, fracturing his wrist. The wound would cost him the use of his arm. The pickets quickly retired, but several of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana were scooped up as prisoners, including Levi Level of Company H, and ten men from Company B. Level recalled falling back as McCulloch's men poured fire into his ranks. As he retreated, Level stepped into a sinkhole, spraining his ankle so badly he could not walk. Instead of killing the injured man on the spot, McCulloch's men spared his life, and took him prisoner. He would not see a doctor for nearly two weeks. It is not known how many were killed, injured or taken prisoner at this point. Records indicate that no further men were captured from Company B, but a total of thirty-four were captured in Company H.<sup>136</sup> Whether these men were captured in part or in total on the picket line is not known. In Company F of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana, Corporal Adam Broom was trampled by a Confederate officer on horseback. It is likely that the officer in question was General McCulloch. Blessington cites two officers on horseback that day, Lieutenant Colonel James Shepard, and Henry McCulloch. However, only McCulloch

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<sup>135</sup> United States. War Department. Confederate States Army Casualty Lists and Narrative Reports, 1874 – 1899, Record Group 109, National Archives, Washington D.C. (Microfilm M836) [Fold3.com]; Blessington, 96-99.

<sup>136</sup> Compiled Service Records of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry; National Archives and Records Administration, *Indexes to Pensions Including Civil War and Later Service*, Publication Number T288, Roll 281, Pension File 632957, Levi Level; Ancestry.com, *U.S. National Homes for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers, 1866-1938* (Provo: Ancestry.com Operations Inc. 2007), 24114 & 28443.

was seen to have actually engaged the enemy. Corporal Broom survived the encounter, but was left with a scrotal hernia on account of it. As a result, he was unfit for further duty and was discharged for disability on June 22, 1864. As the detachment of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana fell back, it appears that Lieutenant George Conn of Company F did not fall back all the way to the levee, but remained near the farmhouse with a portion of his men.<sup>137</sup>

McCulloch's men did not give chase, but waited on their Commander's order to advance. McCulloch would not give that order until first light. It was a wise decision, given that McCulloch's scouts were seemingly unavailable now, and that he did not know the terrain that lay ahead. David Cornwell of the 9<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry, waiting on the Union left, did know what lay ahead. Cornwell and his men stood in formation behind a levee. Until the day before, there had been a large hedge which covered the front of the levee, and which would have seriously impeded a Confederate force from approaching. During Cornwell's absence on scout, some thirty yards of the hedge had been cut down on what would be the Union left, where Cornwell and his men were now waiting. Only an objection from Colonel Cyrus Sears of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana prevented the whole of the hedge from being cut down.<sup>138</sup> There would be five Union regiments present that day, four of them composed the African Brigade. The 9<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry anchored to the

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<sup>137</sup> Compiled Service Records of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry; Blessington, 96-100. The service records of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana indicate that five officers became casualties. Three were killed, one wounded, and one, Lieutenant George Conn, was captured. Blessington relates the tale of a Yankee officer with a company of black soldiers near the barn who were captured by the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Infantry after the battle had begun. Given the proximity of the barn to the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana's position on the levee, it makes sense that Conn had remained at the barn after falling back, perhaps out of confusion, and was later captured along with a large number of his men by the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Infantry.

<sup>138</sup> Wearmouth, 207-09; Cyrus Sears, *Paper of Cyrus Sears, Read before the Ohio Commandery of the Loyal Legion, October 7, 1908* (Columbus: F. J. Heer Printing Co, 1909), 13.

Union left. To its right, the 1<sup>st</sup> Mississippi Infantry went into position, and next to it, the 13<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry. A small gap remained in the line between the 13<sup>th</sup> Louisiana and the regiment which would hold the Union right, the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry. The all-white 23<sup>rd</sup> Iowa, which had not yet disembarked from its transport, was expected to fill the gap. Across the field, General McCulloch ordered his regiments into line. The 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Infantry would remain in reserve, and the other three regiments would charge the Federal line on the levee. Positioned across the Richmond Road, the 19<sup>th</sup> Texas Infantry would take the Confederate right, the 17<sup>th</sup> Texas Infantry the center, and the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Cavalry under Colonel Edward Gregg would take the left. Blessington reported a voice, in all probability McCulloch's, booming out, "McCulloch's Brigade, advance!"<sup>139</sup> With those three words, the battle of Milliken's Bend began in earnest.

Behind the levee, the early rays of the sun revealed McCulloch's formations moving forward. Cornwell recalled that "they had the appearance of a brigade on drill," and that the Texan line covered the field from end to end while advancing across it. This precision remained until the men encountered the rifle pits of the enemy, which somewhat slowed their advance. In Company G of the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Cavalry, John Connelly did not remember such an easy march.

In approaching the position of the enemy we had to march through a large field which was exceedingly rough and broken and covered with running vines and briars. Many of the men were barefooted and their feet were lacerated.<sup>140</sup>

Barnickel reported outrage from some of the Federal soldiers at the sight of a herd of mules ahead of McCulloch's ranks, which acted as a living, moving shield for the

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<sup>139</sup> Barnickel, 88-89; Blessington, 96; Wearmouth, 211.

<sup>140</sup> Wearmouth, 211; Connelly Memoirs,

Confederates. The occurrence was also reported by the *Daily Gazette* from Janesville, Wisconsin, which held that McCulloch and his men had deliberately gathered the animals the night before, to use them in such a manner. This seems unlikely for several reasons. Firstly, as Barnickel points out, mules were a part of the day-to-day military operations at Milliken's Bend, and also at nearby plantations. McCulloch, for all the brashness he had displayed at Perkins Landing, was unlikely to risk vital troops herding mules. Secondly, after a ten mile march and only a brief rest, it would make little sense to further exhaust the Texas troops by having them herd animals; let alone animals famed for their stubbornness.<sup>141</sup> It seems more likely that the presence of the mules was simply an accident.

As the two sides came together, the thirty-yard gap described by Cornwell became a boon for the 19<sup>th</sup> Texas Infantry. It gave them not only a clear field of fire, but according to Private R.H. Tutt of that regiment, the initial clash with the 9<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry was a bayonet charge.<sup>142</sup> This would not have been possible unless a majority of the regiment was able to charge. Men performing a bayonet charge in small increments would have been easily overwhelmed even by inexperienced soldiers such as the new recruits of the African Brigade. Cornwell also told of a bayonet charge by the Texans, but only after they had fired a volley into the 9<sup>th</sup> Louisiana. Cornwell related that the Texans had begun to march at double quick once they were about two-hundred yards from their opponents. Cornwell's men opened fire once the Texans had reached the hedge, but the inadequate firearms training undergone by the men resulted in most of the projectiles sailing over the heads of the Confederates. With a clear space ahead, McCulloch's

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<sup>141</sup> *Daily Herald* [Janesville, Wisconsin], June 13, 1863; Barnickel, 89.

<sup>142</sup> Yeary, 759.



Texans rushed forward. Cornwell wrote that “where the hedge was down the Rebs sailed up the exterior slope of the levee to meet our thin line...with empty guns and lowered bayonets.”<sup>143</sup> Since the 19<sup>th</sup> Infantry had waited for nearly four hours to charge, it is improbable that they had not loaded their guns during that time. Instead, they had poured fire into the 9<sup>th</sup> Louisiana prior to lowering their bayonets. R.H. Tutt claimed that his regiment had “killed 1000 negroes in eight or ten minutes.” While this claim is undoubtedly an exaggeration, it is indicative of the damage done by the Texan bayonet charge, and the ensuing hand-to-hand combat.

In the meantime, the men of the 17<sup>th</sup> Texas Infantry found themselves divided. Some had neared the Federal line near the opening in the hedge, and according to one Union officer, they “came around through it, but did not deploy to their left to obtain their original position in line. Instead they rushed the levee at this point.” The 17<sup>th</sup> also saved their ammunition, as they poured through gaps in the hedge, reforming their ranks, and charging. A soldier in the 17<sup>th</sup> Infantry recalled “rushing through the hedge” to charge the enemy. If he had not hit near the large gap in the hedge, it is improbable that he would have been able to rush through if he had not arrived at or near another.<sup>144</sup> The men of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Texas Infantries, being positioned on the Confederate left, were thus able, at least in part, to approach the levee with little difficulty. Barnickel, in her assessment of the casualties of the African Brigade, shows that the two black regiments that formed the center of the Federal line at the opening of the battle, took an extremely low number of casualties. The 13<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry, positioned immediately to the right of the 9<sup>th</sup>, sustained only five casualties, none of which appear to have been fatal. The 1<sup>st</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Wearmouth, 212.

<sup>144</sup> Lowe, 91.

Mississippi, next in line, sustained only twenty-six casualties. Given the extreme differences in experience between the regiments, it does not appear feasible that the 13<sup>th</sup> Louisiana was able to withstand the onslaught. Instead, they fled, followed closely by the 1<sup>st</sup> Mississippi. The swiftness of their departure allowed the 19<sup>th</sup> Texas Infantry to swing in on the right of the 9<sup>th</sup> Louisiana, and the 17<sup>th</sup> Texas Infantry to swing in on the left of the 1<sup>st</sup> Mississippi. This caused the sudden collapse of the Federal center, and may account for the large number of casualties in the 9<sup>th</sup> Louisiana. Standing in line five men deep, the 285 men had only one avenue of escape – to the rear – when the 19<sup>th</sup> Texas suddenly rushed in on their right. This seems to explain the discrepancy in General McCulloch's post-battle report, in which he stated firstly that the charge of his brigade "carried [the levee] instantly," and secondly, that the charge "was resisted by the negro portion of the enemy's force with considerable obstinacy."<sup>145</sup>

At the far end of the battlefield, a gap still remained between the crumbling lines of the 13<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry, and the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry. The reinforcements from the 23<sup>rd</sup> Iowa Infantry, meant to fill that gap, had not realized the urgency of the situation, and had leisurely made their way off of their transport, waiting for stragglers. Their Colonel rode up, and seeing McCulloch's men pouring into the field from the hedge, ordered his men forward at double-quick. It was the hedge, whose partial removal had allowed the 19<sup>th</sup> and part of the 17<sup>th</sup> Texas Infantries to so quickly approach the levee that had bought him the time to reach the faltering Federal line.<sup>146</sup> The 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Cavalry had encountered no gaps in the hedge, and so were obliged to make their own. In Company

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<sup>145</sup> Ibid; Barnickel, 88, 204; United States. War Department. *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union And Confederate Armies*. Series 1, Volume 24, In Three Parts. Part 2, Reports., book, 1889; Washington D.C., 467, hereafter cited as *Official Records* [Portal to Texas History].

<sup>146</sup> Barnickel, 92.

A, Lieutenant James M. Lindsay arrived at the hedge, and hacked an opening for his men to pass through, as had Captain John H. Tolbert of Company D. Private John Hendrex of Company F also remembered having to cut through the hedge. John Connelly wrote that “there was no opening where my company struck the hedge, so I ordered the men to lie down while I with my cavalry saber, which was sharp as a knife, cut a hole through which they dashed and joined their comrades on the levee.” Connelly had been joined in his efforts by Lieutenant William A. Choice.<sup>147</sup>

Regardless of the weaponry they carried, the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas and the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana were now within firing distance of each other. John Scott recalled “The Sixteenth Texas...attacked the enemy in their center where there was a bend of the levee, consequently they suffered severely from the enfilading fire.” The 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana peppered the emerging Confederates, prompting Scott to write that he had seen “a sheet of flame greeting them from the rifles of the negro troops.” The bend in the levee described by Scott seems to account for Barnickel’s report that a part of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana had remained firm on the levee, firing into the lines of the 16<sup>th</sup> Cavalry as they pushed the defenders back. Emerging from the hedge, the men of the 16<sup>th</sup> would likely have noticed only the enemy in front, and charged accordingly. Once they received fire from the portion of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana on their left, they could not turn to confront them without exposing their flank to the larger force. Captain John H. Tolbert, emerging from the hedge, was shot in the abdomen. Sergeant James B. Gardenhire was also struck down, and Private John Brasfield died instantly from a bullet to the heart. Private Isaac Hall of Company C, carrying the color-bearer for the 16<sup>th</sup>, was shot down, and the flag taken up

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<sup>147</sup> *Sherman Daily Register*, October 13, 1900; Collin County Genealogical Society. Collin Chronicles, Volume 9, Number 2, Winter 1988-1989, 32-34 [Portal to Texas History]; Connelly Memoirs, 179.

by his Sergeant, William “Blue” Brogdon. As they neared the levee, a well-placed shot from above sent a Federal bullet through the top of Lieutenant Dudley Waddill’s buttock. The projectile ripped its way down the back of his thigh, and came to rest behind his knee. The wound would result in his discharge the following February.<sup>148</sup>

Colonel Edward Gregg, leading the regiment, was wounded in the thigh and forced to quit the field. His second in command, Major William W. Diamond, received an identical wound, and also withdrew. Command then fell to Senior Captain James D. Woods, who led the regiment for the remainder of the engagement. McCulloch’s report indicates that the regiment, instead of hesitating after losing two Commanders, fought harder after the loss. They had experienced the loss of a Commander in the field eleven months prior, when Colonel William Fitzhugh had been wounded at Cotton Plant, Arkansas on July 7, 1862, and so were grimly prepared for this occurrence. The 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana also had its commander withdraw – though not from wounds. Colonel Edwin Chamberlain had turned tail and ran for the river, making his way to one of the waiting gunboats. Nor would Chamberlain be the only officer in disgrace that day. Lieutenants James K. P. Russell and Ira Kilgore of the 16<sup>th</sup> Cavalry’s Company E would be arrested on June 10 for deserting their posts and Company. In Colonel Chamberlain’s stead there remained the other two field officers, Lieutenant Colonel Cyrus Sears, and Major William Cotton. Sears remained in command throughout the battle after Chamberlain’s disgraceful conduct, but Major Cotton was killed by a shot to the head soon after the battle commenced. The men of the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Cavalry, now led by Senior Captain James D. Woods, had begun to return fire. In Company D of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana, Private William

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<sup>148</sup> Compiled Service Records of the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Cavalry; *Sherman Daily Register*, October 13, 1900; Barnickel, 95.

Cuff was shot in the leg. Despite the resulting amputation, he died three days later. In Company F, Private William Jefferson was shot in both arms, with the horrible effect that both limbs had to be amputated. In Company G of the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Cavalry, Lieutenant Thomas Batsell received a mortal head wound. The unfortunate Lieutenant would linger for some two weeks. Lieutenant George Dickerman was wounded in both arms, ultimately losing the right arm, and having the left crippled. As the two lines came together, Corporal John Huff of Company B was bayoneted in the arm. Corporal Thomas Reagan was wounded in the shoulder, and would die of the wound within a month. John M. Wright of the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Cavalry remembered the ferocity of the hand-to-hand struggle. “We made it hot for those negroes,” he wrote, “there was not one left to tell the tale.” John Hendrex of Company F recalled that many of the wounds received by the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Cavalry were caused by Federal bayonets.<sup>149</sup>

About this time, the 23<sup>rd</sup> Iowa had struggled into line, moments before the 13<sup>th</sup> Louisiana crumbled, allowing the left wing of the 17<sup>th</sup> Texas Infantry to pour through. Silas Shearer of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Iowa later wrote his wife that his regiment had entered the battle with 140 men, “and about one half was killed and wounded.” The swift flanking action by the 17<sup>th</sup> Infantry accounts for both the heavy casualties in the 23<sup>rd</sup> Iowa, and that regiment’s swift departure from the battlefield. What should be evident now is that the 1<sup>st</sup> Mississippi’s flight from the levee began a kind of domino effect in the Federal line. Only the regiments that anchored the far ends of the Federal line, i.e. the 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana

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<sup>149</sup> Official Records; Wearmouth, 213; Compiled Service Records of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry, African Descent; *Sherman Daily Register*, October 13, 1900; Compiled Service Records of the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Cavalry; Edward Dwight Dickerman and George Sherwood Dickerman, *Descendants of Thomas Dickerman an Early Settler of Dorchester, Massachusetts* (New Haven: The Tuttle, Morehouse & Taylor Press, 1897), 74-75; Van Buren Contraband General Hospital, pp. 9-22, 193, Field Records of Hospitals-Louisiana, v. 159 (entry 544), Records of the Adjutant General’s Office (RG94), NARA; Yeary, 823; J. S. Bryan to My Dear Wife, July 4, 1863; Connelly Memoirs, 167; Collin Chronicles, 33.

Infantries, were able to stand for a significant amount of time. Because of the bend in the levee, the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana's line had been formed in an L-shape, with the majority of it behind the levee, facing the enemy. The two companies farthest to the left had formed the hook of the "L," with the end of their line having its right side facing the hedge.

Examination of their service records indicates that there were 707 men present for duty on the day of the battle. David Cornwell states that there were 800 present, but then amends it to 680. Barnickel reports that Captain Frank Orm had given the same number. It appears, however, that Cornwell was correct in another detail. Only eight companies of the 11<sup>th</sup> had been sworn in. The remaining two, Companies E and K, did not participate in the fight. In all, the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana took 228 casualties at Milliken's Bend in killed, wounded, and missing. Conspicuous by absence from those numbers are companies E and K.<sup>150</sup>

Company E had been recruited only two days before at Grand Gulf, and did not have enough training to be put into the fight. Company K consisted of only three men, one of which was their Lieutenant, Peter Wood. All three were transferred to different companies by August. Putting men with these numbers and lack of experience into the field made little sense, and so the number of men present – not in camp, but on the field – most likely totaled 680. Subtracting the 21 men of Company E and the three men of Company K from the overall total gives an exact number of 682. Cornwell states that their number made up over half of the men present.<sup>151</sup> On the battlefield, the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana began to crumble as the 23<sup>rd</sup> Iowa gave way. According to John Connelly, "the

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<sup>150</sup> Harold D. Brinkman, Ed., *Dear Companion: The Civil War Letters of Silas I. Shearer* (Ames: Sigler Printing & Publishing, Inc., 1996), 50; Wearmouth, 207-11; Barnickel, 203-04; Compiled Service Records of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry, African Descent; *Sherman Daily Register*, October 13, 1900.

<sup>151</sup> Compiled Service Records of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry, African Descent.

enemy strove manfully to stem the fight, and the reeling ranks bore up for [sic] awhile, then gave way like a loosened cliff.” As they fled, Captain John Abbott of Company A was shot in the back of the leg. The 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Cavalry gave chase. Private Andrew Jackson Lucas of Company H recalled, “I don’t know how many negroes we killed, but they were strewn for half a mile.” The contest had not lasted long on the levee. One telling detail is that John Scott of the 16<sup>th</sup> Cavalry had remembered the regiment’s first color-bearer being shot down, and Sergeant “Blue” Brogdon taking it up. Brogdon survived the battle without a scratch. Historian James McPherson explains that men bearing the regimental colors were the most likely to be shot down because of their visibility. Even given the short amount of training the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana had received, their officers would doubtless have been able to direct fire toward a color-bearer, especially after one had already fallen. That Brogdon not only survived, but survived unharmed, demonstrates that there had not been time to fire again. Moreover, it makes it appear that the 11<sup>th</sup> had likely been forced back, or fully engaged before a Federal bayonet or musket butt could send Brogdon crashing to the earth.<sup>152</sup>

Barnickel holds that part of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana remained behind to fire into the rear and flank of the 16<sup>th</sup> Cavalry as they pursued the remainder of the 11<sup>th</sup>, an account borne out by John Scott’s account of a bend in the levee, and enfilading fire. It is most likely that these were the two companies to the left of the main line.<sup>153</sup> The 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Infantry, in the meantime, had received orders to move up, and had marched to the bottom of the levee with fixed bayonets. Their course was altered by a messenger from

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid; Yeary, 453; James M. McPherson, *For Cause & Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 84; Compiled Service Records of the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Cavalry; Connelly Memoirs, 179.

<sup>153</sup> Barnickel, 95; *Sherman Daily Register*, October 13, 1900.

General McCulloch, who ordered them to turn to the left, and deal with the remnant of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana. While en route to their new destination, they began to receive fire from the direction of the farmhouse. A detachment from Flournoy's regiment soon picked up a small number of men, but greater success was had by a single Private who had been sent to get water for the wounded. The Private in question, Anton Schultz, had been sent on a horse belonging to his regimental Surgeon to get the needed water. On approaching the house, he was immediately surrounded by a Company of black men in Federal uniforms, with one white officer commanding them. This officer, most likely George Conn, demanded to know where the main body of Confederate troops was positioned. Schultz deceived Conn by indicating a completely different direction, and offered his assistance to guide the men of the African Brigade to safety in their own lines. Rather naively, they agreed, and Schultz led the men into the gunsights of his own regiment. McCulloch claims that forty-nine men were captured as a result of Schultz's actions. That number is exactly the amount of men missing from Companies F and H of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana after the battle. It has already been established that these two companies were a part of the Federal picket force earlier that morning. To all appearances then, Lieutenant Conn had become disoriented on falling back from the picket line, and had remained at the farm along with fifteen of his own men, and thirty-four from Company H. Blessington established that some Union soldiers had been cut off from the main line when he told about General McCulloch being confronted by a single Yankee soldier who attempted to shoot him. McCulloch shot the unfortunate soldier instead. The thick nature of the fighting along the levee makes it very doubtful that men had slipped through the lines and been left behind. It seems more probable that men had become



confused as they retreated from McCulloch's skirmishers early in the fight, and had not reached their own lines before the battle began in earnest.<sup>154</sup>

On the far side of the levee, John Connelly remembered the enemy had “stampeded over the plain, followed by the Texans, and took refuge under the cover of the river banks.... When we saw the enemy fleeing, a loud hurrah rent the air and the bloody work was done.” Lowe reported that some Texans continued to pursue the enemy, while others halted to loot the Federal camp between the levee and the riverbank. Among the latter was Private John Gallagher, the regimental drummer for the 16<sup>th</sup> Cavalry, who took a fife from a Federal tent. Others looted food, weapons, and livestock. Frank Parsley of Company E was among those who pursued the African Brigade to the riverbank. Two things prevented McCulloch's Brigade from pushing them into the Mississippi River. The first was that the bank was a better fortification than the levee. The second was shells from the Federal gunboat *Choctaw*. Firing blind with direction from shore, the gunboat accidentally fired into the ranks of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana, which they had mistaken for Confederates. Colonel Cyrus Sears, the *de facto* Commander of the 11<sup>th</sup> later said “I was very unpleasantly spattered with blood, brains and flesh of one of our men, who there had his head shot off from one of our gunboats.” The gunboat shells also took their toll on the ranks of the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Cavalry. Frank Parsley, who had been pursuing the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana, had a projectile explode next to him. The blast tore through his right leg. The limb was later amputated, and left Parsley with only the top third of his thigh. With no way forward due to the shells of the gunboats, the Confederates pulled back to the safety of the levee, and began firing at the Federals from that position. For the remainder of the

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<sup>154</sup> Official Records, 468-69; Blessington, 99-100; Lowe, 93-94; Compiled Service Records of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry, African Descent.

battle, some 150 yards separated the two lines, and it is doubtful that much was accomplished during that time. Nevertheless, the fire continued between the two sides until noon, but it was far from Confederate bluster. Instead, it appears that they were attempting to keep the Federals away from their wounded until they could remove them from the field. John Connelly wrote later that “We remained in possession of the battlefield until the wounded were sent to the rear...When the wounded were gone, Gen. McCulloch, seeing that further sacrifice...was useless, withdrew his brigade.” J. H. Pillow of the 17<sup>th</sup> Infantry also maintained that they had remained to clear the wounded from the field. Then they withdrew to the makeshift hospital, set up in slave cabins about two miles from the battlefield.<sup>155</sup> The battle of Milliken’s Bend had ended.

The violence of the battlefield had ended, but for many, the suffering had only begun. The 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana had lost twenty-four men killed. A further thirty-three would die of their wounds in the following weeks. Fifty-eight had been wounded, and 113 were missing, including George Conn. At least three would require amputations. Private William Cuff of Company D required a leg amputation because of a gunshot wound, but died three days after the battle. Benjamin Williams of the same Company required an amputation of his thumb, and died of his wounds on June 30. William Jefferson of Company F had both arms amputated on account of his wounds. In all, 228 casualties had been taken. In the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Cavalry, the casualty figures were significantly less. Eighteen lay dead on the battlefield, and four more would soon follow, including Lieutenant Thomas Batsell, who had been wounded in the head. The others were

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<sup>155</sup> Connelly Memoirs, 179; Lowe, 94; *Wylie News*, February 6, 1975; Sears, 16; Lowe, 95; Connelly Memoirs, 179; Yearly, 609-10; Arkansas State Archives. Confederate Pension Records, 1891-1935. See medical report in the pension application of Franklin Parsley.

Sergeant John H. Smith, Corporal Thomas Reagan, and Private Finis Tweedle. Five would require amputations. In total, sixty-four men had been injured, killed, or mortally wounded, less than half of the casualties taken by the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana, even excluding those taken prisoner. The nature of the wounds taken on both sides tell of the ferocity of the fighting, and are revelatory of its nature.<sup>156</sup>

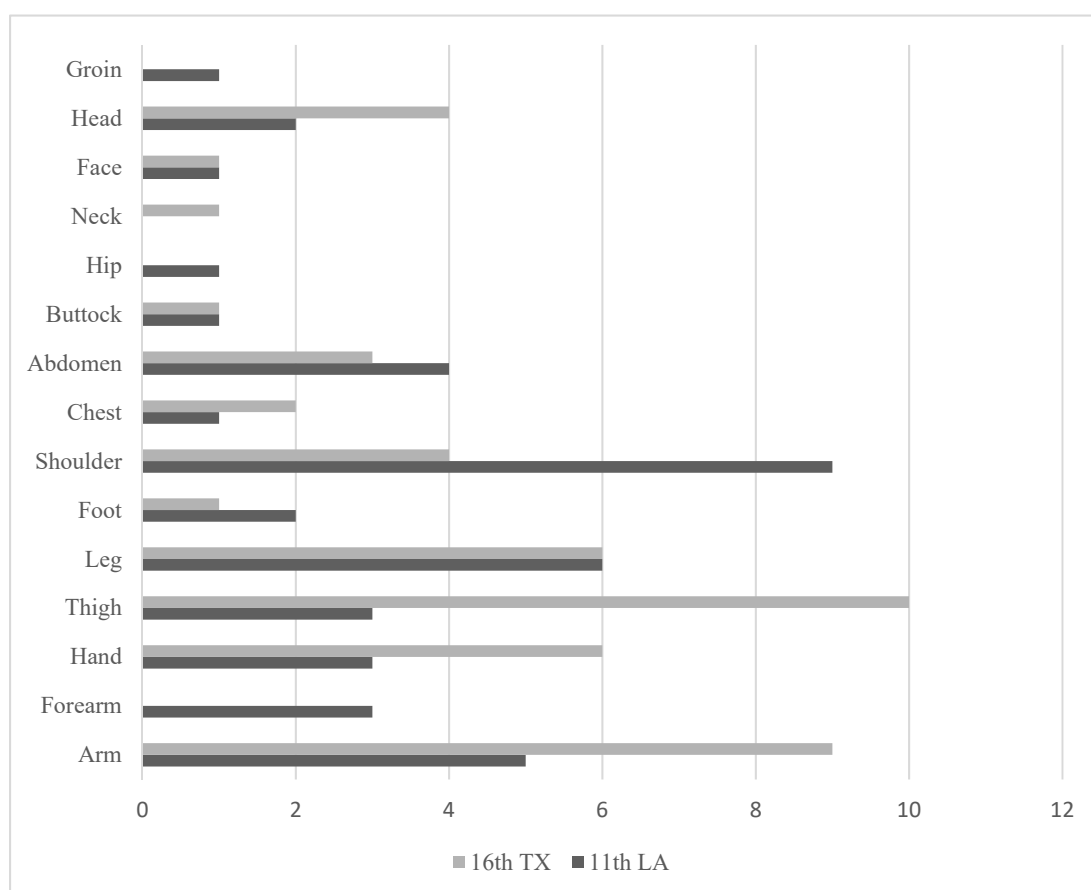


Figure 4.2. Comparison of the wounds of the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Cavalry and the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry.

<sup>156</sup> Compiled Service Records of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry, African Descent; Compiled Service Records of the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Cavalry; Van Buren, 9-22, 193; Official Records; D. M. Ray, *Roster of 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Cavalry, Dismounted* (Whitewright: Self-publication, 1907) 4-23

While a comprehensive list of wounds from both regiments is not possible to compile, it is possible to take the available data and derive from it the kinds of wounds received, and thus the nature of the fighting. As can be seen in figure 4.2, the largest concentration of wounds from both sides tended to be to the limbs. Few on either side were wounded in the head or abdomen. Wounds received by the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana tended to be to the arms, shoulders, and upper body. Wounds received by the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Cavalry appear to have been mainly to the arms, thighs, and hands, with wounds to the head and abdomen coming in close behind. The wounds of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana also show a significant amount were caused by gunshots. Only five wounds among the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Cavalry are listed as gunshot wounds. No fewer than fifteen such wounds are listed among the injuries of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry. This alone speaks of the greater training of the

Texans, and the inadequate time that the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana had had to train. This number includes one fatality from each regiment. Private John Brasfield of the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas was shot in the heart, and Major William Cotton of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana was shot in the head. These statistics seem to indicate that the majority of other wounds received were taken in hand-to-hand combat on the levee. Veteran testimony from the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Cavalry also seems to support this. John Hendrex wrote that “this engagement for a while was hand to hand, many of the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas being bayoneted and the butt end of the guns were used freely.” This statement, along with that of John Connelly regarding the duration of the fight, speaks well of the fighting worth of the new recruits of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> Compiled Service Records of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry, African Descent; Compiled Service Records of the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Cavalry; Van Buren, 9-22, 193; Ray, 4-23; Connelly Memoirs, 179; Dickerman, 74-75 Collin Chronicles, 33.

Connelly, as related above, had seen battle before. Yet the scenes afterward at the makeshift Confederate hospital he termed “indescribably horrible.”

Every cabin was crowded with the wounded and dying and many were lying on the ground under the shade of the trees, apparently in the most excruciating agony. Prayers, groans, and bitter exclamations fell upon my ear wherever I turned. Some lay at length on blankets with eyes half closed and limbs motionless. Some would start up shrieking with pain, while the wandering eye and incoherent speech of others indicated the loss of reason and the near approach of death. I was the spectator of several amputations and on every side was heard the piteous cries of the wounded undergoing various operations. I cannot describe the strange and ghastly feelings which [sic] was created by the sight of a pile of arms, hands, legs, and feet, some still covered with their socks, severed from the bodies of our gallant soldiers.<sup>158</sup>

Blessington related that the cabins were located about fifteen minutes' march from the battlefield, and marked with yellow flags. Blessington wrote that “so fearful, so horrible are the scenes that, long after you leave the place, perhaps haunting you to the verge of life, the screams of the wounded, the groans of the dying will ring in your ears.” Few accounts exist of the African Brigade in its own field hospital. Yet from the words of Connelly and Blessington, viewing and hearing far fewer wounded and dying men, it can be imagined that the horrors there more than rivaled the Confederate experience. The battle and its aftermath had clearly stayed with both Connelly and Blessington, as they did with David Cornwell. Cornwell, also wounded at Milliken's Bend, was startled awake in his hospital bed by a dream about the battle. Colonel Cyrus Sears, who had led the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana through the battle, clearly recalled its horrors in a speech nearly fifty years later.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> Connelly, 179.

<sup>159</sup> Blessington, 102; Wearmouth, 237-38; Sears, 16

With such strong memories and testimony on both sides, it must be wondered how such an important and bloody battle came to lose its place in history. It is not enough to say that it had little strategic importance. Nor is it sufficient to say that because most of the battlefield lies deep under the murky Mississippi, it no longer has a tangible presence. Something very real has affected the memory of Milliken's Bend. One vital clue lies in the fact that out of all of the sources referenced in this chapter, only two come directly from the enlisted men of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana. In this way, the surviving accounts can be said to be very one-sided.

Death is one of the conclusions of battle, and by extension, of war. How death is met, on the other hand, makes a difference. If death comes on the battlefield in the heat of combat, there is little else to remark upon. If, however, death comes to an individual or a group of combatants after battle has passed, more questions tend to arise. One of the largest specters that has historically haunted the legacy of Milliken's Bend is the charge of a massacre having taken place. It has already been established in this chapter that no massacre took place on the battlefield. The large number of casualties taken seem to have been the result of McCulloch's Brigade being able to so fully and quickly penetrate the Federal lines, essentially trapping the remaining regiments in kill-zones. With only one avenue of retreat, those in front were struck down until the ranks had thinned enough for all to flee. This is also an important distinction to make: they fled, rather than surrendered. There is no reference from sources on either side to say that any man fighting at Milliken's Bend was killed while attempting to surrender. If a massacre took place after the battle, then it stands to reason that those killed were prisoners of war.

Linda Barnickel presents compelling evidence that George Conn met such a fate.<sup>160</sup>

African-American historian William Wells Brown, writing several years after the war, charged the Confederates quite literally with murder, though he contended that those killed had been the black troops.

There is one fact connected with the battle of Milliken's Bend which will descend to posterity as testimony against the humanity of slaveholders; and that is, that no negro was ever found alive that was taken a prisoner by the rebels in this fight.<sup>161</sup>

Yet Levi Level had not only come back alive from captivity, but had been treated by a Confederate surgeon at Monroe. Private George Washington of Company A, reporting to his regiment in December of 1865, claimed to have been held as a prisoner of war in Texas until just prior to his return.

There are other items about Milliken's Bend that do not add up to the battle involving a massacre. Firstly, since this was only the second battle in which black regiments had taken part, there had been no prior massacres, and thus no precedent set for such an event. As far as Texas troops were concerned, armed black men were a complete novelty. Historian Randolph B. Campbell, in his book *An Empire for Slavery*, which covers slavery in Texas, states:

The ultimate expression of slave rebellion, of course, was organized violence or insurrection aimed at freeing large numbers of Negroes and perhaps killing large numbers of whites. Insurrection, however, was not common in Texas. Indeed, the whole period to 1865 was marked by only one attempted uprising and one or two plots that were wildly exaggerated by nervous slaveholders to blame "free soilers" and "abolitionists" for causing trouble.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> Barnickel, 129-31.

<sup>161</sup> William Wells Brown, *The Negro in the American Rebellion: His Heroism and His Fidelity* (Boston: Lee & Shepard, 1867) 137-141.

<sup>162</sup> Randolph B. Campbell, *An Empire for Slavery: The Peculiar Institution in Texas 1821-1865*, Kindle Edition (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1991, Kindle Edition), location 2778.

Gregory Urwin, author of *Black Flag Over Dixie*, reported an officer present at the battle of the Crater as saying, “every bomb proof I saw, had one or two dead negroes in it, who had skulked out the fight & killed by our men. This was perfectly right, as a matter of policy.”<sup>163</sup> If this was policy, there is little to suggest it was in place at Milliken’s Bend. There were accusations that the Confederates had charged with cries of “no quarter.” The fact that some of the black troops had been taken as far as Texas as prisoners, and held as such until 1865, suggests that there is more to this tale. The descriptive roll in the service record of Private Washington of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana, who had been so detained, also precludes the possibility that he could have passed for a white man, and thus been spared. Hermann Lieb, in charge at Milliken’s Bend that day, wrote that the shouts on the battlefield were directed at the white officers. “No quarter for white officers, kill the damned Abolitionists, but spare the niggers,” Lieb claimed they had cried.<sup>164</sup> Linda Barnickel also relates an interesting statement from Trans-Mississippi Commander E. Kirby Smith, to the man responsible for carrying out the attack at Milliken’s Bend, General Richard Taylor.

I have been unofficially informed that some of your troops have captured negroes in arms...I hope this may not be so, and that your subordinates who may have been in command of capturing parties may have recognized the propriety of giving no quarter to armed negroes and their officers. In this way we may be relieved from a disagreeable dilemma.<sup>165</sup>

That the men were supposed to “recognize the propriety” of executing black soldiers suggests that there was no standing order to that effect in place at the time of the

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<sup>163</sup> Gregory J. W. Urwin, *Black Flag Over Dixie: Racial Atrocities and Reprisals in the Civil War* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2004), 205-06;

<sup>164</sup> Lowe, 97; Compiled Service Records of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry, African Descent.

<sup>165</sup> Barnickel, 115.



battle of Milliken's Bend. Sergeant John Bryan of the 16<sup>th</sup>, in his post-Milliken's Bend missive to his wife, unintentionally made a revealing error. "[sic] Thair was but one bregade of our men engaged in the fight and I do not know how meny fedrels and negros thair was ~~we took about~~..." The last three words of the sentence are scratched through, but still visible and legible. Bryan seems to have been about to estimate the number of prisoners taken, and thought better of it. It is almost as if he had been warned against such a statement by a superior. Lieutenant Addison Clark of Company D in the 16<sup>th</sup> does not seem to have been so cautious. In a letter to his brother, Randolph, in July, Clark wrote "I got a splendid new hat from a soldier for \$11 he got it from one of the negroes we took." As an officer himself, it may not have bothered Clark to discuss the taking of black prisoners, or he may have simply seen nothing wrong with telling the truth. Clark went on to write that "the ignorant fellows say that we are just fighting for the [sic] negroe, they do not consider that we must fight all enemies in whatsoever form and as for my part I had rather kill one [sic] yankie than ten negroes."<sup>166</sup> Clark says nothing about having executed black prisoners, though he does seem willing to fight them. He also seems to have had few compunctions about looting the prisoners. What he does not do is to give them identification as soldiers. They were not "negro soldiers" but the "negroes we took." These do not seem like the statements of a man who had murdered black prisoners in cold blood.

Perhaps the most compelling evidence comes from General McCulloch himself. In his report of the battle, McCulloch praised the efforts of Anton Schulz, the young

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<sup>166</sup> J.S. Bryan to Dear Nancy, June 9, 1863; A. Clark to Rand, Dear Brother, July 17, 1863.

soldier from Flournoy's Regiment who was probably responsible for the capture of George Conn. As a reward for Schulz's actions, McCulloch recommended that

If such things are admissible, I think he should have a choice boy from among these fellows to cook and wash for him as long as the negro lives. And as the horse of Dr. Cocke was lost in the praiseworthy effort to procure water for our wounded, another of the fellows might be well and properly turned over to him to compensate him for his loss.<sup>167</sup>

In essence, McCulloch saw the men of the African Brigade as slaves, not soldiers. This train of thought is borne out by other statements from his report. In speaking of another soldier of Flournoy's Regiment, Captain Marold, who captured some nineteen black soldiers, McCulloch wrote, "these negroes had doubtless been in possession of the enemy, and would have been a clear loss to their owners but for Captain Marold." McCulloch ended his praise of the officer by opining that if the men were to become the property of the Confederacy, that one or two of them should be given to Marold.<sup>168</sup>

This line of thinking makes perfect sense for a Confederate officer at this time. First, the presence of black troops on the field was a novelty, and giving them serious consideration as soldiers was unlikely to occur at this stage. Second, the twin defeats at Vicksburg and Gettysburg, the turning points of the war, were the better part of a month away. Thus, the Confederates had little reason to imagine that black soldiers, or free black men in any significant numbers, would become a regular occurrence. Instead of black soldiers, they were still considered property, and property of that sort was too valuable to damage or destroy. This would explain why Levi Level, with such a badly sprained ankle that he could barely walk, was spared, evacuated from Richmond, and

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<sup>167</sup> Official Records, 468-69.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

treated by a Confederate surgeon.<sup>169</sup> According to Quarles, while the 54<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts had taken the heaviest casualties in the assault at Fort Wagner, the Confederates do not appear to have harmed those casualties lying on the ground the morning after the assault, but instead, “removed the wounded.”<sup>170</sup> In fact, it does not appear that any of the infamous massacres of the United States Colored Troops took place until 1864. The battle of Olustee, which saw black prisoners and survivors of the battle killed in its aftermath, occurred in February, 1864. The battle of Poison Springs, Arkansas, occurred in April, and the battle of the Crater took place in July.<sup>171</sup> It therefore does not appear that any indiscriminate slaughter of black soldiers took place until the Confederate plight had become desperate, and certainly not at Milliken’s Bend. This does not, of course, exclude the possibility that well-trained but practically speaking, inexperienced troops may have, the heat of battle, shot down men attempting to surrender. At present, however, there seems to be little evidence to support such an occurrence at Milliken’s Bend. What does seem to have happened is that two small regiments in the center of the Federal line panicked soon after initial contact with the Confederates, then broke and ran. The resulting opening in the line allowed the Confederates to flank the remaining units, who were then cut to pieces by an onrushing enemy. There seems to have been no plan for a mass slaughter, nor an improvised one afterward. Instead, the battle of Milliken’s Bend ended in what was essentially a draw, with neither side able to advance.

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<sup>169</sup> Level Pension.

<sup>170</sup> Quarles, 17.

<sup>171</sup> Urwin, 65-75, 110-12; 132-35; 203-05.

## CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION

Turning right from the main road east out of Tallulah, Louisiana, there is an empty stretch of road. At the end of this road there stands a lonely house. In the front yard of the house two metal signs, close together, indicate Grant's Canal, and the remnants of the battlefield of Milliken's Bend. In a stark contrast to the violence and noise of that bloody day, the area is peaceful and quiet. The only sounds are the gentle, thrumming rattle of tractors from a farm across the street, and the cheerful strains of birdsong. Situated perhaps half a mile back from the Mississippi River, it is as close as one can get to the site without permission from the landowners. There is no monument to soldiers from either army. The levee is gone, as is the thorny hedge, the nearby town, and all who fought there. A large, empty field is all that remains,



*Figure 5.1.* Panorama of the battlefield of Milliken's Bend as seen from the marker. Photograph by author, March 6, 2018.

yielding crops where men once yielded their lives. This churned, furrowed ground has likely spoiled much, if any remaining evidence of the battle. Yet all is not as it seems.

A short distance away, in Vicksburg, across the Mississippi River, there are two items housed in the Old Court House Museum. The first is a silver cup, looted from Milliken's Bend by a Federal soldier, and given to his sister. This item is a remnant of the town of Milliken's Bend. The second is a well-made, but otherwise unremarkable walking cane. It is not the cane itself, but rather to whom it belonged, that makes it special. The cane



*Figure 5.2.* Lt. Locke's cane in the Vicksburg Old Courthouse Museum. Photograph by Author, March 8, 2018.

belonged to one Joseph Locke – the selfsame Lieutenant of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana who so cordially invited his Adjutant's lips to meet his hindquarters. According to the information on the card, and to former museum Director Gordon Cotton, Locke had fallen in love with a Confederate widow, and returned to Milliken's Bend. Outliving his bride, Locke remained in Louisiana, where, according to the person who donated his cane, he became the last resident of Milliken's Bend. Census records only indicate that he lived in the Parish, but do not state Milliken's Bend.<sup>172</sup> Nevertheless, there is little doubt that this old cane walked the earth of that sanguine battlefield not once, but many times. A close inspection of its nether end shows that some of that earth still clings to it.

Thus to say that Milliken's Bend no longer has a tangible presence is to deny the power of such remnants. True, they are not in the strictest sense, battlefield relics, but for a battlefield which has been allowed to vanish to such an extent as Milliken's Bend, it is almost as close as one could hope to come. In the same way that the significance of such relics may not be realized by everyone who sees them, so too was the perception of the battle of Milliken's Bend different for everyone who experienced it. Confederate veterans who detailed their experiences there declared their domination of the field. White Union officers reported the bravery and fighting power of their inexperienced recruits. For the men of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana, it does not seem that there was any real effort to leave a memory of the battle behind. What memories they did leave were mainly second-hand in pension applications and the log books of soldiers' homes. Their actions were also telling. They were buried in National Cemeteries as American veterans, they became

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<sup>172</sup> Gordon Cotton, interview by Author, March 8, 2018; 1920 Federal Census. Mr. Cotton also stated that Locke's status as the last resident of Milliken's Bend is difficult to verify, aside from the statement of the cane's donor.

members of the Grand Army of the Republic, they listed themselves on the 1890 Federal Veterans Schedule, and they applied for pensions as veterans. It seems then, that they valued having served more than they did a single battle. Looking at these items then, it becomes evident that Milliken's Bend was remembered in three ways. It was remembered by Confederates as a battle where they were stubbornly opposed, but in which they eventually dominated the field. It was remembered by white Union officers as a battle in which black men astonished them by standing their ground and holding it against a better-trained enemy. Lastly, it was remembered by black men as a single battle in a much larger and much longer struggle.

As for why the battle disappeared from national consciousness, three factors seem to stand out: timing, position, and effect. There were three battles soon after Milliken's Bend that captured the public's attention and imagination. First, Gettysburg turned back the seemingly unstoppable Robert E. Lee, and thus dealt a serious blow to the Confederacy's war machine, and its morale. At the same time, it gave a much-needed lift to the forces of the Union. Second, there was the surrender of Vicksburg, the siege of which Milliken's Bend had been an effort to relieve. This made Milliken's Bend look like a half-hearted effort to ease pressure on the city. Third, there was the battle of Fort Wagner. Celebrated as one of the leading examples of the fighting worth of black men, Fort Wagner is distinct from Milliken's Bend for one simple reason: position. At Fort Wagner, the 54<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts was the attacking force, and withdrew only after taking heavy casualties. At Milliken's Bend, the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana and the other regiments that composed the African Brigade were the defending force. They were driven from the field after a portion of their line broke and ran. While regiments like the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana proved

their tenacity, others did not. The glorious, doomed charge of the 54<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts, by contrast, seems far more heroic. What Fort Wagner and Milliken's Bend have in common is that both battles failed in their objective. The 54<sup>th</sup> never took Fort Wagner, nor did McCulloch's Brigade seize or destroy supplies bound for the Federal army besieging Vicksburg. The 54<sup>th</sup>, however, made a lasting impression with their assault. The 11<sup>th</sup> bore up well, but failed in their defense, as did the Texans in meeting their objective. Taking into account these factors, it is not surprising that Milliken's Bend has slipped into relative obscurity.

The three sets of men who fought there had their own ways of remembering it. Yet if Confederate silence on the issue of black soldiers as equals is proof of their shame, the same may be said of the Union men who denied having fought or even served with such men. This is yet another reason that Milliken's Bend no longer stands out in the larger picture of the Civil War. The men who fought there were unwilling to discuss having fought with and against black soldiers, and so valuable testimony that could have helped to shed light on the battle has been lost to time. Yet as the preceding pages have shown, there are still ways to draw out details from the dead. Service records, pension records, national homes, Confederate homes, and even burial records can help to uncover evidence otherwise obscured. Service records can help to identify patterns of behavior in both enlisted men and officers. While, as stated previously, the microhistorical approach taken in this thesis may not provide an absolute, nor definitive account of Milliken's Bend, it does help to reveal patterns and bring to light new information. The lives of the men themselves provide insight into how battles are remembered, and how they are forgotten. Their service records, compiled into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, allow for



the organization of data to show how different men were treated at the same time. This approach was taken with the service records of both regiments concerned in this thesis. In the case of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry, highlighting in red the rows of those who died in service gave the appearance of a bleeding page – a somewhat disconcerting phenomenon. One benefit of this was that it became immediately obvious that there could be only minimal veteran accounts. The men of the 11<sup>th</sup> left mainly second-hand, perhaps even unintentional accounts of the battle. Yet drawing on those details has provided information on who was and who was not on the levee that day.

It has also provided an in-depth look at the attitudes of men on both sides of the battle, and whether or not they took pride in their service at Milliken's Bend. The men of McCulloch's Brigade, whether they realized or not, paid a high compliment to the men of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana by recording how hard the fight had been. Whether they recalled "many of the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas being bayoneted and the butt end of the guns... used freely," like John Hendrex, or having been "[led] through fire and blood into the jaws of death, into the jaws of hell" like John Scott, they had admitted that inexperienced former slaves had handled themselves like soldiers on the battlefield. David Cornwell of the 9<sup>th</sup> Louisiana perhaps stated it best when speaking of his favorite recruit, the hulking Jack Jackson. "With the fury of a tiger he sprang into that gang and smashed everything before him.... There was nothing left of Jack's gun but the barrel, and he was smashing in every head he could reach."<sup>173</sup> Such unmitigated fury would have proven a challenge for the most seasoned veteran, and it is the memory of fighting such determined men to which the veterans of the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Cavalry paid such backhanded tribute. Colonel Cyrus Sears

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<sup>173</sup> Collin Chronicles, 33; *Sherman Daily Register*, October 13, 1900; Wearmouth, 212.

of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana paid no such compliment to his enemy. The casualty figures from the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana speak well enough in that regard.

Their post-war lives have also provided valuable information on how the battle was perceived by both sides. Their settlement patterns indicate that the men of the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas preferred to remain in or near the State from which they had served. The men of the 11<sup>th</sup> preferred to remain near the area where they had always lived, and near where they had fought. Both largely remained in the area that they had seen themselves as defending. In simpler terms, they remained close to home. The men of the 16<sup>th</sup> went about their lives, some rising to relative prominence within their State. The officers of the 11<sup>th</sup> also showed some inclination toward politics, but for the most part, seemed content to forget that they had been at Milliken's Bend. Among the rank and file of the 11<sup>th</sup> there are, unsurprisingly, no politicians, orators, or anyone of State or local prominence. It is telling, though, that a number of them removed to Kansas in the years following the war. For all its childhood familiarity, "home" for black men in the Reconstruction South could be a hostile and deadly environment. Apart from those few seemingly possessed of wanderlust, the men of the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas saw little need for such an exodus.

The veterans of Milliken's Bend, whether they wore blue or gray, seem not to have made any serious efforts to preserve its memory. On the surface, given the shortcomings of the battle in any meaningful military sense, this does not seem to be a great loss. The things that set Milliken's Bend apart are its extreme hand-to-hand violence, the accusation of a massacre, and the impression that the African Brigade left on an American public that doubted the martial abilities of African-American men. The findings set forth here indicate true horrors inflicted on both sides, dispel the idea of a



*Figure 5.3.* The marker at Milliken's Bend. Photograph by author, March 6, 2018.

massacre, and leave little doubt that former slaves made fine soldiers. These are things worth remembering, and worth the endless hours of searching that have brought them to light. A short distance away from what remains of the battlefield lies Vicksburg, Mississippi; the very city whose siege the battle of Milliken's Bend was intended to break. A visit to the site of the Union and Confederate entrenchments will reveal multiple huge monuments to the men who fought there, commemorating both the men and the sacrifices they made. At Milliken's Bend, a single, faded metal plaque situated on the far edge of a resident's yard bears witness to the violent struggle. Visitors will not find on it

the names of the men of the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana, nor their opponents in the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Cavalry. The only participant mentioned is General McCulloch. Yet the sacrifices demanded of the men of these two regiments were no less than those demanded of those besieging and defending Vicksburg. The Vicksburg monuments make of the visitors a simple request: remember us. The men of the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas and the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana would no doubt make the same plea. The preceding pages have shown how they remembered the battle. The question that now remains is, if further work is not done, how will Milliken's Bend be remembered?

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## APPENDIX A

**Findagrave.com Memorial Numbers of the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Cavalry**

Alexander, James - 14139224	Deaver, John A. - 161843585
Amos, Benjamin - 134723258	Denson, Shadrack - 54232450
Andrews, Alvin Rufus - 86431939	DeSpain, Benjamin F. - 73240157
Andrews, Oliver A. - 103757261	Doss, Thomas J. - 63740497
Bailey, Robert D. - 39159026	Dougherty, Frank M. - 62752379
Ballard, Andrew J. - 19874806	Douglass, Burtis F. - 8638271
Barbee, William - 62676139	Douglass, Hamilton - 8865739
Barnes, Nurial G. - 91883149	Dunlap, James M. - 6343756
Barnhill, Elijah - 16162860	Dyer, Dwight - 27572011
Basket, Frank D. - 167765829	Farris, James - 54556300
Bell, William - 24790773	Farris, Silas - 104516864
Berry, Eppa - 6463181	Ferguson, James - 9497945
Berry, Samuel R. - 6463245	Fisher, Andrew J. - 51933053
Bigby, Henry C. - 93108747	Fitzhugh, George W. - 10688510
Blanks, Erving - 46572641	Fletcher, William E. - 84387537
Bourn, Levi - 63475802	Forsyth, Henry C. - 43875301
Bowman, William A. - 6337899	Gallagher, James - 9716286
Boyle, John W. - 54192434	Gardenhire, Stephen H. - 31386061
Brown, Mithero Berzanes - 8266939	Gates, Frederick L. - 32840939
Brown, William J. - 10475459	Graves, Wiley M. - 10367902
Brunk, Mark S. - 51039056	Gray, Edward - 29674907
Bryan, James R. - 7318536	Gregg, Edward P. - 86564840
Burns, Robert L. - 133435541	Grisham, Thomas E. - 7318845
Burns, William W. - 9713048	Gumm, Jacob - 43685796
Bush, Fernando - 30525103	Hall, Patrick A. - 132941937
Butler, James W. - 163098525	Hall, Thomas A. - 64923409
Cannon, Edwin - 63869280	Hampton, Benjamin W. - 10554245
Caruth, James - 29068569	Harris, Joseph - 32536308
Chambers, Elijah W. - 6496942	Hethcock, John W. - 64273383
Clampett, Decatur D. - 14731230	Hicks, David C. - 11394656
Clark, Addison - 28184178	Housewright, Louis M. - 24135781
Cleveland, Willis G. - 14727714	Huddleston, Jeri H. - 18573403
Clodfelter, George W. - 33370564	Hudson, Martin W. - 68209627
Collins, Lee O. - 12549659	Hull, William - 55748565
Connely, John W. - 16157711	Hutton, Bartlett - 105085249
Connely, Redmond T. - 46572732	Ingraham, Samuel W. - 104547122
Copeland, Hardin - 71911221	Jarboe, Thomas J. - 32536363
Coppage, Neil - 27154761	Jenkins, John Thomas - 41808545
Dale, Calvin S. - 25949053	Jones, Andrew J. - 44925528
Davis, James M. - 98878752	Jones, Archibald Burton - 23857239
Davis, Matthew - 32372344	Jones, Calvin W. - 43432669
DeArmund, Russel - 6513937	Kearly, Enoch C. - 44847935

Kilgore, William H. - 10638535	Savage, James - 17493610
Ladd, Hezekiah - 37782793	Savage, Robert (Bolin) - 87807036
Langham, Wiley W. - 112490775	Scott, John - 137200141
Largent, William B. - 6609681	Shears, John - 17954613
London, James M. - 17202968	Simpson, DeWitt C. - 55021903
Ludiker, James - 6234773	Smoot, William B. - 56925923
Martin, John W. - 82940522	Snider, Aaron H. - 10703417
Maxwell, James E. - 13163640	Sparks, Thomas - 16929067
McDonald, William R. - 100178367	Sporling, George M. - 11844061
McGehee, Alexander - 40965230	Spurgeon, Moses A. - 12107376
McGraw, Thomas - 149025095	Stallcup, John W. - 31597670
McMurry, James M. - 63780011	Taylor, Reuben A. - 7318491
McWhorter, William E. - 10280569	Taylor, William B. - 20867297
Miller, John J. - 10727856	Trout, John H. - 63901066
Mondier, Peter L. - 32866285	Tucker, Amos B. - 42236230
Moore, Addison D. - 6488789	Turner, Milton T. - 5560392
Morrow, George D. - 50355215	Vowell, Finis E. - 18786241
Moss, John - 101217259	Wallace, Elmore D. - 14109888
Murphy, James F. - 61667123	Warden, John - 4270401
Music, Uel - 93405047	Ware, James - 11888112
Nayson, Samuel - 113358569	Washburn, Joseph W. - 70328538
Newton, Jasper M. - 43471764	Wharton, Samuel - 17701191
Norrell, Isaac M. - 138332765	Wheeler, Benton V. - 102806167
Pace, David W. - 7665878	Wheeler, Tilmon C. - 151658170
Peery, Elijah C. - 30608128	White, John M. - 71174370
Phillips, William A. - 42127588	White, Media - 52736531
Pierce, George W. - 6662671	Wicker, Thomas H. - 50208355
Poindexter, John T. - 54343355	Wilcoxon, Robert E. - 13424334
Pope, John W. - 11394286	Willett, Nimrod D. - 44453839
Ray, Oliver P. - 66569384	Williams, Benjamin - 50857513
Reasenover, John - 68185713	Williamson, Joseph S. - 42774072
Recer, James - 31179957	Williford, Henderson L. - 7494516
Rhine, David - 46779578	Wimberly, Edgar - 41438205
Riffe, William L. - 29368980	Wood, Stewart M. - 48811861
Robberson, Jason G. - 82356291	Work, Alexander - 11926167
Roberts, Thomas - 79213453	Wright, Martin - 39573204
Ross, Theodore A. - 28566171	Wright, Spencer - 50304618
Rowland, Thomas - 105927026	Wynn, Gabriel Franklin - 47431918
Russell, James K. P. - 143054758	Yancy, William B. - 29118987
Russell, James V. - 10648925	Yowell, Leroy E. - 47431918
Samson, James - 9618740	
Savage, Andrew W. - 40499165	

**APPENDIX B:****Findagrave.com Memorial Numbers for the 11<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry, A.D.**

Abbott, John Wilson – 29025678  
Anderson, Peter – 6012365  
Bass, Phillip – 8622834  
Bates, Albert L. – 130092776  
Blonden, Thomas – 112192469  
Buswell, William Wallace – 74932487  
Chamberlain, Edwin Augustine – 36006539  
Clark, Cornelius – 2564025  
Colt, Alexander Robinson – 116081115  
Cotteral, Thomas – 3290677  
Davis, Randall – 6533767  
Griffith, Eli W. – 14387660  
Hacker, Andrew Jackson – 9332274  
Hall, James P. – 103234824  
Howard, John W. – 153110137  
Hunter, Robert – 60379865  
Huston, Stewart – 3671779  
Jelks, Levi – 7654259  
Johnson, Wesley – 847023  
Johnson, William Sr. – 2566518  
Kerr, Robert – 6563517  
Koehler, John C. – 43949052  
Lane, Morris A. – 62092403  
Lanning, Sylvester – 12945132  
Latimore, J. – 6534609  
Level, Levi – 6542083  
Masserson, Wesley – 130169571  
McKinsie, Walton – 185838947  
Orm, Frank – 21617706  
Payne, Newton – 3677491  
Pickerl, Jonathan – 82286903  
Pintler, Augustus Theodore – 7479324  
Quilla, Samuel – 3091682  
Riley, James Edward – 138329809  
Sears, Cyrus – 8423892  
Spangler, William – 132496606  
Stanfield, Joseph Whitney – 21163351  
Warfield, P. – 11911287  
Wood, Peter C. – 51326534



## VITA

**Isaiah J. Tadlock**

### EDUCATION

Master of Arts in History at Sam Houston State University, August 2015-December 2018. Thesis title: "Remembering the Battle of Milliken's Bend."

Bachelor of Arts (May 2015) in History, *cum laude*, University of Houston-Victoria.

Associate of Arts (May 2011) in History, Blinn College.

### ACADEMIC EMPLOYMENT

Admissions Clerk at Blinn College, Brenham Campus, January 2016-November 2016. Responsibilities include receiving and processing admissions documents, scanning and attaching documents to student accounts, monitoring Admissions inbox to answer questions from new and prospective students, assisting with new student orientations, assisting enrollment services and taking student payments as required, use of Microsoft Office Suite, use of Ellucian Banner, use of FORTIS scanning.

Administrative Assistant/ Workforce Education Coordinator/ Bookstore Manager at Blinn College, Sealy Campus, November 2010-December 2015. Responsibilities include taking student payments, administering and proctoring student exams, administering and proctoring Texas Success Initiative Assessment (TSIA) exam, processing admissions documents, monitoring Admissions inbox to answer questions from new and prospective students, scheduling and building Workforce Education classes, use of Ellucian Banner, use of Microsoft Office Suite, ordering textbooks for each semester and sending back unsold items to vendor, operating and settling book buybacks with Accounting Department, operation of cash register and credit card machine for bookstore, settling register and sending reports to Accounting Department, ordering of all supplies for campus.

### PUBLICATIONS

*Handbook of Texas Online*, Isaiah Tadlock, "Hernández, Alejo." Uploaded on May 17, 2016. Modified on May 31, 2016. Published by the Texas State Historical Association.